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"IS IT YOU, MARIGOLD! I AM GLAD YOU HAVE COME. DON'T LEAVE ME!" PHILIP MUTTERED, DISCONNECTEDLY.

OUT OF THE STORM.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

It was a very stormy night—of that there could be no doubt. The wind shrieked and howled as it tore round the corners, and rattled at the windows, the sea boomed heavily as it flung its waves on the pebbly shore, the rain came down in torrents. Philip Stanmore, on his way to catch the night mail to London, thanked his lucky stars the station was pretty close at hand, and then said a naughty word under his breath as the wind caught his umbrella, and playfully turned it inside out.

While he was struggling with it, he became aware of the presence of another person, also engaged in the same futile occupation, not half a dozen yards away, and a second glance showed him that the person was young, and pretty, and quite unequal to the task of battling with the

blustering wind. Having contrived to close his own recalcitrant umbrella, he came to the lady's assistance, and rendered her the same kind office.

"It is too windy to hold up an umbrella," he said, in his deep, but kindly voice. "One had better run the risk of getting wet. I hope you have not far to go!"

The girl looked at him uncertainly, and with a half shrinking timidity that struck him as curious. The light of the rain-blurred lamp fell upon her face showing its delicate oval, its pale but not unhealthy complexion, its wonderfully large and pathetic hazel eyes. Those eyes haunted Philip for many a long day after; they told a tale of sorrow such as youth like her's ought not to have known, and at the same time they seemed to be searching his face with a view to discovering whether its owner were trustworthy.

"I want to find The Gables," she said, at last, having apparently come to a satisfactory conclusion on the point—and, indeed, there was something extremely winning in the young man's dark, clear cut face, with the steadfast grey eyes, and the heavy black moustache. "I am a

stranger, and I do not know my way. I looked about hoping to find someone to direct me, but the place is deserted."

As she spoke there came a fierce gust of wind which whirled her slight figure against the lamp-post, showing how unfitted she was to brave the fury of the storm. Philip's mind was made up. He must see her safely to her destination, whether he missed his train or not.

"I think I know the house you mean, although I am more or less a stranger to Westpool," he said, "I will take you there if you will allow me."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, vehemently, "I cannot let you do that. Tell me where it is, and I can find it for myself."

Another gust of wind, fiercer than the last, made it necessary for her to cling with all her might to the lamp-post. Under any other circumstances Philip might have smiled, but he was too much occupied in the effort to keep his feet, to appreciate at its full value the humour of the situation.

"It is impossible for you to go by yourself," he said at last, very decidedly. "The storm is increasing in violence, and you would never be

able to withstand it. Take my arm, and I will do my best to protect you."

There was an accent of authority in his voice, and unconsciously she obeyed it. Without further ado, she let him draw her arm through his, and then he turned back, and led her along the rainy parade until he got to the end, when he turned to the right, and advanced along a road where the houses were few and far between. Not a word was spoken between them, and as the sea was left behind, the fury of the wind lessened, and the grasp of the girl relaxed—once or twice she had found it necessary to cling to him with as much tenacity as she had clung to the lamp-post, and a slight smile had curved his lip under his moustache as he felt her small fingers interlacing over his arm. Oddly enough, he felt himself possessed by an intense longing to see those dark eyes gazing up into his once more.

At length he paused before a pair of heavy iron gates, giving access to an avenue of shrubs. In the distance a good many pointed roofs were visible.

"This is The Gables. Do you think you will be all right now?"

"I am sure I shall." She withdrew her arm from his, hesitated a moment, and then extended her hand. "Thank you very much for your kindness, I am grateful," she said, simply.

Philip took the hand and bowed over it. It was small, and it seemed to tremble in his clasp.

Her voice, too, was sweet and vibrant with the same curious pathos as her eyes expressed.

Philip was glad he had missed his train for the sake of hearing those few words of thanks.

She turned from him, hesitated once more, and came back to his side.

"Will you do me a favour?" she said, in a swift whisper. "I do not want anyone to know of my arrival here. It is a secret which is of importance to me."

"And a secret it shall remain, so far as I am concerned, if such be your wishes," he returned, gravely.

Again she thanked him, and he stood watching her until the darkness and the shrubs hid her from his view; then he retraced his footsteps, wondering what the meaning of the secret to which she alluded could be, and haunted by those dark eyes, and the sweet, flute-like tones of her voice.

Meanwhile she had pulled the long hanging bell, and waited with beating heart until the summons was answered.

"Is Miss Edith Blessington at home?" she asked, tremblingly, of the butler who opened the door, and who looked very much amazed at the apparition of a strange young lady making a call at the unusual hour of ten p.m.

"She is in, miss, but—I'm not sure she will see visitors so late."

"Oh, but she will see me, I know she will, if you will only take this to her!" exclaimed the girl, eagerly; and she gave into his hand a sealed envelope.

Her confidence was justified.

In a few minutes a tall, stylish girl with dark eyes, and rosy cheeks, ran out of the drawing-room, and threw her arm, impulsively round her guest.

"Why, Marigold, this is indeed a surprise! What good fortune has blown you here on the wings of this boisterous wind? But come in. Aunt has gone to a party, and I am all alone. How wet you are! Where is your luggage?"

"I have none."

Miss Blessington did not express astonishment. She was a young lady of singular self-possession; moreover she had a fund of that rare, but useful commodity known as common sense, therefore she took Marigold to her dressing-room, divested her of her wet garments, wrapped her in a tea gown of her own, and then seated her in front of a good fire, and made her drink a cup of tea, and eat two pieces of buttered toast before she demanded an explanation of her unlooked for appearance.

"You were the only friend I had, Edith," said Marigold, "and when I was in such trouble, you were the only person who I thought could help

me. Do you remember when we were at school at Brussels together, telling me to come to you if ever I wanted a real friend?"

"I remember, and I'll keep my word," was the emphatic retort. "You used to seem to me so dreadfully lonely even in those days. Your only relation was your stepfather, and stepfathers are not always unmitigated blessings, I am well aware."

Marigold shivered slightly.

"My life since I left school has not been happy," she said. "We have wandered about, my stepfather and I, from one place to another, but lately he settled down in a lonely house in Norfolk, and his nephew came to live with us. This man's name is Vale Craven, and he made love to me—for what reason I cannot tell, for I disliked him from the first, and made no effort to conceal my dislike. However, he persisted, and my stepfather, Mr. Craven, favoured his suit, and did all he could to persuade me to marry him. I refused over and over again, and then my stepfather grew very angry, and told me I was a wicked and rebellious girl, and did not know what was good for me. He said he had tried fair means, and as they had failed, he should resort to strong measures, so he locked me up in my bedroom, and kept me there declaring I should not be let out until I had promised to marry Vale."

"Ah, Edith, it was dreadful being left there alone from morning till night, with not a creature to speak to, not a book to read, not even any sewing to do! I thought after I had been there for nearly three weeks I should have gone mad; and I almost made up my mind to marry Vale, much as I detested him; but early this morning I determined to make my escape if possible, so I tied the bedclothes together and let myself down to within about ten feet of the ground then I managed to catch hold of the branches of a pear-tree trained up the side of the house, and so reached the garden. No one was up, and I ran all the way to the station—a distance of three miles. I had just enough money to pay my fare to W— which is a junction, and there I got out, and went into the town, and sold my watch. With the money I got for it I came on here. I thought you would give me a home for a week or so perhaps until I could look out for something to do."

"For a week or two indeed! You shall stay as long as you like. As for getting anything to do—well, we'll see about that later on. How glad I am I happened to be at home! I was to have gone out with Aunt Elise, but I didn't feel quite up to it."

At the mention of her aunt a shadow crossed Edith's brow.

Miss Elise Blessington could be extremely sweet and amiable when she liked, and on the other hand she could be just the reverse when she didn't like.

Even yet Edith had not altogether fathomed her aunt's character.

The two girls sat up in the luxurious dressing-room, listening to the wind howling amongst the chimneys, and the rain beating against the windows, until the sound of carriage wheels announced Miss Blessington's arrival.

Presently she came in—a woman of five or six and thirty, handsome, and commanding looking, but with an impenetrable expression in her flashing dark eyes.

She was magnificently dressed in pale yellow satin, softened with priceless lace, strings of pearls were round her throat, and twisted in the heavy coils of her black hair.

She listened in silence while Edith told the story of her friend's arrival, and her eyes travelled swiftly over Marigold's tremulously flushing face.

As her niece finished she held out her hand to the younger girl.

"My dear, I am glad to welcome you to The Gables. You have been very badly treated, and I shall try my best to make you happy while you remain under this roof."

Edith was not altogether satisfied with this speech; but Marigold's agitation prevented her from noticing any lack of warmth in it as she

bent down, and gratefully kissed the hand extended to her.

Soon afterwards Miss Blessington left the room for her own suite of apartments, and as she stood in front of the long cheval glass, looking attentively at the radiant image it reflected, a curious change came over her face, her brow darkened, her upper lip curled, her nostrils quivered.

"So, Vale Craven, the day has come when I can do something towards paying off the old score between us!" she muttered, below her breath. "Ten years ago you slighted my love, you tossed it back to me like a worn out plaything of which you were tired, and now you are in love with this chit of a child who has come to me for protection? Well, I will protect her from you at all events. From some motive or other, you must be very anxious to marry her, or you would never have gone to such lengths as making a prisoner of her, and it must be my task to see that before you set eyes on her again, she is the wife of someone else!"

CHAPTER II.

MARIGOLD stayed on at The Gables, and was introduced as Miss Blessington's niece—a harmless little fiction designed to protect her from possible discovery on the part of her stepfather.

There was not much society in Westpool, but such as it was, Miss Blessington dominated it as its queen.

She was indeed a dominating woman, whose strong will exercised an unconscious but none the less powerful influence on all her surroundings.

About a week after Marigold's arrival, the lady of The Gables gave an "At Home" to her friends, and insisted on the young girls appearing at it.

Marigold, although she shrank from society, had no alternative but to obey her hostess's wishes, accordingly she and Edith busied themselves in re-arranging one of the latter's evening dresses, with an eminently satisfactory result.

"You look quite charming, my dear!" said Miss Blessington, as the two girls came into the drawing-room, brilliant with lights, and fragrant with banks of odorous exotica. "Turn round so that I may see you better."

Marigold did as she was bidden, blushing and smiling the while. Her white dress was very simple, but it suited her to perfection. She wore no ornaments—except, indeed, the white rose with its green leaves nestling in her hair, and the buds pinned in her corsage—but her dark eyes shone like stars, and there was a delicious bloom in her oval cheeks.

"You look like a bride," said Miss Blessington, with a half envious sigh—perhaps for her own departed youth. "Well, we will hope you will soon become one. That would certainly be the easiest way out of your difficulties."

Marigold seemed startled at the words. This was a solution of the question that had not occurred to her. Oddly enough her thoughts flew back to the young man who had protected her from the storm on her first arrival at Westpool. She had seen nothing of him since, neither had she mentioned him even to Edith; but she could have repeated every word he had said to her, she remembered every inflection of his voice, and many a time had she recalled the kindly glances of his grey eyes as they looked down into hers.

Just then the first batch of guests were announced, and they were speedily followed by others. The room soon filled, for Miss Blessington was voted a charming hostess, and invitations to her parties were eagerly sought for. After a little while she brought a young man up to Marigold.

"Let me introduce Mr. Gasgoine to you, my dear. Miss Lester, Mr. Gasgoine."

Marigold bowed, and started a little as the young man spoke. There was something in his tones that struck her as oddly familiar, and yet when she looked into his face, she found that she had never seen him before. Cyril Gasgoine was strikingly handsome, his features were regular, his eyes were fine, his hair waved from his brow

in almost girlish ripples, the full lips showing under his drooping chestnut moustache were unusually red. No, she had never seen him before, and yet there was the same odd familiarity in his face as in his voice.

"I suppose, Miss Lester, you know everyone here," he said, taking a seat beside her, and stealing a glance at her from under his half-shut lids.

"No, I am a stranger."

"Ah, then, that is a bond of sympathy between us, for with the exception of our hostess, and Captain Smyth—who was kind enough to bring me with him—I am not acquainted with a creature in the room."

"But you live at Westpool, don't you?"

"At present I am staying here—for my health."

Marigold looked at him in undisguised astonishment. To all appearances his health was perfect. He smiled as he met her glance.

"You are thinking that I don't look ill?"

"Yes," she answered, frankly, "I believe I was thinking so."

"Appearances are not always to be relied on."

"I suppose not."

"There is nothing much the matter with me," he added, stroking his moustache with his forefinger, "I developed a cough, and my chest was threatened, so I was ordered off down here, to see what the invigorating breezes of Westpool would do for me. There's no denying they are invigorating."

"I hope they have done you good?"

"Oh, yes, I am pretty fit now, thank goodness."

"And I expect you will be leaving soon?"

"Well, I'm not so sure of that. Westpool has many attractions." He pointed the remark by a glance that deepened the colour in Marigold's cheeks. Later on he took her into supper, and during the evening contrived to pay her a good many attentions—to the great disgust of the belles of Westpool, who cast many envious glances in her direction.

"You must not turn the head of my little niece by too many flatteries," said Miss Blessington, smilingly tapping his sleeves with her fan, as he approached her with an ice. "She is very young, and quite unaccustomed to the attention of fashionable London men."

"She is very charming, Miss Blessington."

"She will be, when she has had a little more experience, and some knowledge of the world."

"She does not require it, any more than the lily requires painting, or the refined gold, gilding."

"As to that, the gold is already gilded," said Miss Blessington with assumed carelessness, as she turned away.

Cyril Gasgoine stood still for a moment, as if lost in thought, then he roused himself, and he went back to Marigold, to whom he devoted himself during the rest of the evening.

That same night as he was walking home with Captain Smyth, he said,—

"By the way, that niece of Miss Blessington's is an extremely pretty girl."

"Ray-ther!" responded the soldier, who was thinking of Edith.

"And an heiress, to boot?"

"Yes. That's the worst of it."

"The worst of it!" repeated Gasgoine, astonished.

"Well, what I mean to say is that the fact of her having such lots of tin doesn't give a poor devil a chance. If she were poor I'd propose to her to-morrow, but as it is—well, as it is, I suppose I shall have to look on while some other fellow snaps her up."

Gasgoine whistled softly to himself, but made no other retort. His own private opinion was that Captain Smyth must be a fool, but this he thought it better to keep to himself. He had no wish to offend the soldier, whose acquaintance he had made in the billiard-room at the Carisford Arms, and who had been kind enough to introduce him at The Gables—where he intended putting in an appearance pretty frequently in future.

In this intention he was ably supported by Miss Blessington, senior, who welcomed him

warmly, and took every opportunity of throwing him into the society of Marigold.

In the morning he walked with her, in the afternoon they rode or drove together, and it became a recognised thing for the young man to drop into The Gables every evening after dinner.

Marigold, was in effect, a little bewildered by his attentions. Naturally enough they flattered her, and she attributed them to the kindly interest he took in her lonely position—for she was under the impression that Miss Blessington had told the circumstances under which she had sought the protection of The Gables—an utterly mistaken idea by the way—Edith was very much taken with the handsome face and fascinating manner of the young man, and was constantly singing his praises to her friend.

"There is only one thing against him, auntie," she said one afternoon when she and Miss Blessington were sitting alone in the drawing-room, "and that is, we know nothing about his family or connections."

"Oh, that is all right, my dear," responded the elder woman, easily; "you only have to hear him speak to know he is a gentleman, and you may be sure Captain Smyth would not have introduced him to us if he had not been quite satisfied with regard to him."

"Only, you must remember, that you told Captain Smyth you were very hard up for young men on the night of your party, and begged him to bring any he knew who were presentable."

Miss Blessington laughed.

"Did I? Well, it is quite true there is a dearth of young men in Westpool, as there seems to be in most places except London; and you can't deny that Mr. Gasgoine is a great acquisition."

"I don't deny it, only I repeat I wish we knew a little more about him."

"He is madly in love with your friend."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And what about Marigold's feelings?"

"I can't quite make them out," returned Edith, knitting her brows together. "To say the truth I don't fancy Marigold herself has fathomed them either."

In this she was even nearer the truth than she knew.

At that same moment Marigold and Mr. Gasgoine were walking along the cliff walk, and he was telling her in impassioned accents that he loved her, and imploring her to be his wife. Their meeting had been—so far as she was concerned, at least,—accidental. She had set out for a long, lonely walk determined to look her position fully in the face.

Kind as the Blessingtons were to her, she could not bear the idea of trespassing much longer on their good nature, and her former desire of going out into the world and getting her own living had returned with renewed force.

She had already on more than one occasion asked her hostess to help her to look for some situation, but Miss Blessington had always met the request by pointing out the danger of her stepfather discovering her, and insisting on her return to his roof. He was her guardian, and until she reached the age of twenty-one she was absolutely under his control. Her terror of him had increased. Anything seemed preferable to being in his power.

"I love you, Marigold," Cyril Gasgoine was saying. "All my hopes are bound up in the dream of making you my wife. Without you all the pleasures of the world would be nothing to me. Ah, darling, tell me that you care for me—ever so little. I am very patient. I will wait for you as long as Jacob waited for Rachael!"

His voice—low and musical—was deep with feeling, his handsome eyes looked pleadingly into hers, his strong hand clasped her wrist. In spite of herself Marigold was moved, and yet even at that moment she seemed to hear the echo of another voice saying,

"Take my arm, and I will do my best to protect you!"

She stood still, and looked out to sea. The waves, diamond tipped, broke with a gentle ripple on the beach, the sky was like azure, the white wings of the gulls flashed silver in the sunshine. Nature seemed in her most joyous mood—how

different to the rage of the elements when she and Philip Stanmore had first met!

"Don't keep me in suspense, Marigold!" went on the entreating voice, and the clasp tightened on her wrist. "Believe me, if you will consent to marry me, I will do my very best to promote your happiness."

He stopped, for she started violently, and drew suddenly backward. Down below on the beach she had seen a solitary man's figure walking, and the man, startled, perhaps, by the sound of voices above him, had looked up, revealing, as he did so, the face of her stepfather, Robert Craven.

"Let us go back!" Marigold exclaimed, in uncontrollable agitation, and hurrying along as she spoke. "I must lose no time in reaching The Gables."

"But surely you will give me my answer?"

This was just what Marigold felt, at the moment she could not do.

"You know my history," she said, while he had much ado to keep up with her rapid pace. "I—"

"I know as much of it as it is necessary for me to know," he interrupted, a trifle impatiently. "As to that, I care very little what it may be. I love you for yourself alone. If you were the beggar maid, and I King Cophetua, it would still be the same. Nothing that you or the world say could make the least difference to me. All I ask for is the right to care for you and shield you from evil."

It would have been impossible for him to select a better way of wooing her. Already she liked him, though she did not love him, and her heart was full of gratitude. Then too, the sight of her stepfather had revived all her old apprehensions.

"I cannot answer you now," she said, "I am too agitated. But come to The Gables after dinner this evening, and then I will give my answer to you."

With this he had to be content. He knew he had an ally in Miss Blessington, though why she should favour his suit so much, was somewhat of a mystery to him. She happened to be in the hall when Marigold came in, and saw at once from her demeanour that something had occurred.

"Come into the library," she said, opening the door as she spoke, "and tell me what ails you, you look white enough for a ghost. What has Mr. Gasgoine been saying to you? Speak to me without reserve, dear child; you may rely upon me to give you the best advice in my power."

In a few minutes Marigold had told her everything, and as she concluded, she burst into tears. "I cannot express how the sight of my stepfather has affected me," she said, shuddering convulsively, and hiding her face in her hands. "He is absolutely pitiless, and if he once got me into his power again, I am sure I should go mad with terror—or consent to marry Vale Craven."

"But he must not get you in his power," returned Miss Blessington, decisively.

"What am I to do if he comes here and claims me? You could not refuse to give me up."

"No, for he has the law on his side, and the law is a tough antagonist. He is your guardian, appointed by your mother, and there is only one way by which you could defy his authority."

"And that?"

"Is by marrying Cyril Gasgoine."

Marigold's eyes remained lowered, a faint flush showed itself in her cheeks, but she said nothing, only listened quietly while her hostess pointed out to her the advantage to be gained from the marriage. At last she said,—

"I am afraid I don't love him as a wife should love her husband."

"That will come later on. He loves you—which is the point of greatest importance. Believe me, Marigold, the best thing you can do is to accept him. You acknowledge that you like him very much although perhaps you are not frantically in love with him. At any rate you like him better than Vale Craven."

"I hate Vale Craven!" she exclaimed, with emphasis; then she leaned her head on her hand, and tried to analyse her feelings towards Cyril. This was difficult. She was attracted by his handsome face and persuasive manner; she was touched by his devotion; and yet—and yet—there was some indefinable mistrust that she

could not understand. She tried her best to shake it off, telling herself that she was suspicious, and undeserving of Gasgoine's affection, which was clearly disinterested: for what motive could he have for wishing to marry her, except pure love? Then, too, Miss Blessington's persuasions undoubtedly carried weight with them, and her terror of her stepfather, put the finishing touch to all. Her mind was made up—she would marry Cyril.

CHAPTER III.

THAT same night Miss Blessington and her young charge travelled to London, Cyril Gasgoine having gone up by an earlier train. The next day he and Marigold Lester were married. What a different wedding to the one the young girl had pictured in her shy maiden dreams! A dingy registrar's office, Miss Blessington the only witness, no orange-blossoms, no bridal garments, no solemn music—only a business-like promise to take Cyril Gasgoine for her wedded husband, and to be true to him "till death did them part." Outside the rain was falling in a slow but continuous drizzle, the pavements were covered with black and greasy mud, the grey skies hung low. She could not forbear a shiver as she stepped into the four-wheeler waiting at the door to take her to the station.

"Good-bye," she whispered brokenly to Miss Blessington. "Thank you a thousand times for all your kindness to me."

A curious change came over Miss Blessington's face. At that moment she realised for the first time that she had been the means of making Marigold run a fearful risk. She knew absolutely nothing of Cyril Gasgoine, and yet she had persuaded this young girl to entrust her life to his. Suppose the marriage should turn out badly! In her anxiety to cheat Vale Craven of his bride she had ruthlessly thrust aside every other consideration. Selfish and revengeful as she was, a pang of remorse rent her heart as she saw the pale, sweet face of the girl-bride smiling a tremulous adieu to her through the cab window.

"I hope it will turn out all right," she muttered to herself, turning away.

The newly-married pair secured a compartment to themselves. Just as the train was starting a newspaper boy came to the carriage window, holding up various journals and magazines.

"Got any change, Marigold?" said Gasgoine; "I have exhausted mine already."

She gave him her purse, with a little smile, and he looked inside.

"Nothing but sovereigns and a threepenny-piece! Well, we must manage with the *Times*; I daresay that will be literature enough for us." Then, as he closed the window, and took a seat next his wife, he looked again into the purse.

"Ten pounds, I see—all in brand-new sovereigns." "It was a wedding present to me from Aunt Elsie, this morning," returned Marigold, simply.

"Was it not kind of her?"

Cyril looked up quickly, a puzzled expression on his face.

"I confess I don't see much kindness in it. Ten pounds is not a great sum for an aunt to give her niece."

"But I am not her niece, really, you know."

"Not her niece!"

"Surely she explained that to you yesterday, when she had her conversation with you about our approaching marriage?" said Marigold, looking startled.

"She explained nothing of the sort. She told me that your stepfather was your guardian, and that he wished you to marry his nephew, which was the reason she gave for our wedding taking place as quickly and secretly as possible; but she said not one word about your relationship to her. Do you mean to say that she is not your aunt?"

"Certainly not. She is no relation whatever to me."

Gasgoine's face grew ghastly. It was a minute before he spoke, and then his voice was low and husky.

"I understood that you and Edith Blessington were co-heiresses of the large fortune left by

old Sir Henry Blessington. Is not that true either?"

"Not so far as I am concerned. Edith, certainly, has a cousin, Marie, who is co-heiress with her of their grandfather's fortune, but Marie is away in Italy. I have not a farthing to bless myself with so far as I know."

Her eyes were raised to his, and she was absolutely startled at the expression she saw there. Rage, disappointment, baffled cunning—all these were there.

The man was too utterly taken aback to be able to control himself, as he saw his bright visions vanishing like a bubble that bursts in the sunshine.

"Confusion!" he muttered, under his breath, and he looked away from her out of the carriage-window.

There was a pause, then Marigold laid a trembling hand on his arm.

"Cyril," she said, her lips quivering, "did you think I was an heiress?"

"I did," he returned, roughly.

"And was that the reason you married me?"

"The sole reason," he answered, with brutal frankness.

Marigold shrank back in her corner of the carriage as if a blow had been dealt her—as indeed it had—the cruellest her young life had ever known.

She was for the moment, stunned, incapable of speech, incapable almost of thought.

It is true she had never been in love with Cyril, but she had liked him, she had trusted him, she had promised herself that she would be a faithful and devoted wife to him, and her heart had been full of gratitude for the affection which he had professed towards her. The disillusion was terrible.

Suddenly he turned round to her, his face white as ashes, his eyes glittering fiercely.

"You have cheated me, deceived me, fooled me; but pray don't think that you have done yourself any good by the supposed success that has attended your plot. If you have played a part, so have I, and my score is not settled yet. So far from gaining a rich husband you have linked your life to a man who hasn't a farthing of his own with which to bless himself—who had to borrow the money necessary to pay the wedding fees—who—it is just as well to be frank—has even married you under a name that does not belong to him! What do you think of that, milady?"

Paler than she was already it was impossible for her to become, but she put up both her hands in order to shut out the sight of his handsome evil face, and wicked, mocking smile.

Her senses reeled in the endeavour to understand this sudden revelation, but for the moment chaos itself seemed to confront her.

She knew he was speaking, but she failed to comprehend the gist of what he said.

Outside the telegraph wires flew past, and a view of sodden fields and gloomy skies was just visible through the rain-blurred window.

At length the train seemed to be slackening speed, and then, as if from a long way off, her husband's words were borne to her.

"At the first station we come to I shall leave you. It was hard work enough to get along by myself, what it would be with a penniless wife, Heaven alone knows! Happily no one except the Blessingtons know anything about our marriage, and you can easily persuade them to keep silence. You shall go your way, I will go mine."

His sneering voice stung her into self control. She dropped her hands from her face, and confronted him with unexpected dignity.

"Very well, it shall be as you say; but before we part let me at least assure you that I am innocent of any intention to deceive you. I thought Miss Blessington had fully explained my position. Why she did not I cannot imagine. I would give half my life to undo the work of this morning; but as that may not be, I will give you my most solemn promise never to molest you in any way, never even to inquire your name or your whereabouts—in a word, I will be as-if this marriage between us had never been. Does that satisfy you?"

"It must."

He gnawed hard at his moustache; the train drew up at a small platform. He reached his Gladstone bag which had been put on the seat, took five sovereigns out of his wife's purse, then threw the purse into her lap.

"I have divided Miss Blessington's handsome wedding present equally between us. That is fair, is it not? Now, good-bye. It is to be hoped we shall not set eyes on each other again."

He laughed harshly, savagely, and then sprang out of the carriage closing the door behind him, without one more glance at the pale, shrinking figure in the corner.

The guard's whistle sounded, the engine gave a preliminary puff, and the train once more glided out of the station, while Marigold sat still and cold as if turned to stone, staring with unseeing eyes at the rain-misted landscape, and wondering in a strange, impersonal fashion, if bride had ever had such a wedding journey before.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a month later, and May was in the full pride of her bright young spring beauty when Marigold found herself being driven in a high dog-cart through the grounds of Helston Chase.

The avenue was formed of horse chestnuts, now covered with pyramids of white and rose flushed bloom, and in the old-fashioned garden close to the house, lilac and laburnum, syringa and guelder rose made a bewildering labyrinth of blossom loveliness, which scented the air with the very breath of the spring.

The house itself was long and low, with a green verandah running along the south side of it, where the roses were only just beginning to blossom, and the windows were French casement ones, opening on to the ground.

It made a pretty picture in the low sunset light, and Marigold thought how happy she might have been in this new home, if only that one terrible mistake of her past could be blotted out. However, she resolutely put it from her mind, and when the groom had helped her down from the high dog-cart, and she had been ushered into a bright home-like room, scented with a great bowl of lilac, she looked perfectly quiet and composed as she submitted herself to the inquiring gaze of Mrs. Packe, the housekeeper—a stout, good-natured, elderly woman, dressed in black, and with a bunch of keys hanging to a steel chataine at her waist.

"I expect you want your tea, my dear," she observed, proceeding to pour it out. "How far have you travelled to-day?"

"From Bournemouth, ma'am."

"It's a good long way. Do you feel tired?"

"Not at all, thank you."

"But you look pale," observed Mrs. Packe, scrutinising the fair, delicate face with great attention, "I hope you are strong?"

"I think I am."

"Because, although it won't be a hard place as my depitty, there'll be plenty to do, and I can't get about to do it, more's the pity. I told you I had broken my leg, and was set fast for some months, so to speak!"

"Yes, I understood that from your letter."

"And that's the reason I had to look out for a depitty," went on Mrs. Packe, shaking her head dolefully. "I wanted to go away altogether, but the master, he wouldn't hear of it. 'Get somebody to take your place for awhile, Packe,' says he, 'and in a few months you'll be as right as a trivet,' and so that's how I came to advertise for a young and willing person, who would take some of the work off my hands, and that's how you came to be here."

"I hope I shall suit you, ma'am," said Marigold, quietly pushing her plate away.

Once more the housekeeper eyed her attentively.

"I hope you will, my dear. There's one thing about you though, that I hadn't bargained for."

Marigold looked up startled, and inquiring.

"I mean I didn't think you'd be quite such a lady. I wanted someone *gentle*, but not exactly a lady."

"You'll find I shall do the work quite as well

as if I were uneducated—better, perhaps," said Marigold, with a faint smile, "I wish to work. I am poor, and I have my own living to earn. I am not accomplished enough for a governess, but I shall like dusting the china, and seeing after the servants, and mending the linen—I think you said those would be my duties?"

"Yes. It won't be a hard place, for there's only the master, and he doesn't keep much company, but he's mighty particular about his books, and the china. No one must touch them except me, and since I've been laid by, he's looked after them himself. You'll have to do it now, and I hope," added the good woman, putting on the severe housekeeperly air, "you'll do it to his satisfaction, and to mine."

"I will try my best," returned Marigold, with perfect sincerity, that went far towards convincing Mrs. Packe that she would "suit."

"The master's away just now, as you'll have time to settle down before he comes back," went on Mrs. Packe. "Now, I daresay you would like to go to your room. I'll ring for one of the maids to show you where it is, and when you are ready you can come back to me again."

Marigold assented, and soon afterwards found herself in a fresh, clean looking bedroom, rendered homelike by a few photographs on the walls, a writing-table, and half-a-dozen bookshelves. She was glad enough to change her dusty travel-stained frock, and bathe her face in the soft clear water, and after her toilette was complete, she stood in front of the open window, looking across the park, all embroidered with the gold and silver of buttercup and daisy, to the distant hills that faded into the misty blue of the horizon. It was all very still and peaceful! The blown scent of flowers hung on the air, the caw of the rooks flying homewards accentuated the silence, now and again a sheep bell rang out musically from the farther pastures.

Looking back on the last few months of her life they seemed to Marigold like a feverish dream.

Her flight from her stepfather's house, her residence at The Gables, her hasty marriage, and its terrible finale—she hid her face in her hands as she thought of it.

But she had not allowed it to crush her. After a few days of miserable self abandonment, she had recovered her courage and set herself resolutely to face her future life.

The solitary good effect of her marriage lay in the fact that she was now in a position to defy her stepfather and his schemes.

Accordingly she lost no time in writing to him, and acquainting him with her new dignity, though she neither gave him the name of her husband, nor a clue to her own address.

Then she looked through the papers, and chanced to see Mrs. Packe's advertisement, which she answered, with the result of obtaining the situation as help to the housekeeper of Helston Chase.

After that she took off her wedding-ring, and tied it by a thin ribbon round her neck, where it lay hidden beneath her bodice.

It was at once the sign of her bondage and her freedom, and although she shivered with loathing at the sight of it, yet she dared not finally throw it from her, as she was more than once tempted to do.

"But I shall forget it in time," she said to herself, as she raised her head, and looked once more on the soft evening landscape. "I am still young, and it is certain my husband," her red lip curled scornfully at the name—"will never molest me. I heard Miss Blessington once say that everyone has a secret in his or her past, so I am not different to the rest of the world, and after all, mine is not a guilty one so far as I am concerned."

The next day she began her duties.

They were not difficult, and indeed, she soon grew interested in them.

Mrs. Packe, being quite unable to move, could only issue orders, and it was Marigold's place to see these orders obeyed.

She was, in effect, the housekeeper, and although the position was one that her education had hardly fitted her for, she was only too delighted to think that she was earning her own living, and securing for herself independence.

Besides, Mrs. Packe herself was a good, kind

motherly body, and quite inclined to act a very friendly part towards her young assistant.

Of the master of the Chase she had not as yet seen anything.

He was away in London, and had written to say he should not be back for another two or three weeks.

And so the spring days glided away, and June came in radiant with azure skies, and scented with roses.

By this time Marigold's first feeling of strangeness had worn off, and she was beginning to feel quite at home. Her old buoyancy was coming back.

After all, she was only nineteen, and although the cloud that had lowered over her young life was a sufficiently black one, yet hope had already showed its silver lining at the edges.

One evening she had been for a walk to the village, a distance of a couple of miles, and was returning slowly, enjoying the balmy air, and the vesper songs of the birds.

The lane, which was a short cut to the Chase, was to all appearance deserted.

It was a pretty lane, with high banks, and luxuriant, unpruned hedges in which wild roses, and honeysuckle ran riot.

Marigold stopped to look at a lovely tangle of the pale pink roses that waved above her head, and suddenly became possessed of a great desire to gather a handful. But alas! the branch she coveted was just out of her reach.

She made one or two abortive efforts, then, half laughing, half annoyed at her want of success, she stood on the bank, supporting herself by the trunk of a tree, and looked longingly at the delicate flowers above her head.

What a pretty picture she herself made in her blue cotton gown, with a wide brimmed hat, and a pair of tan gauntlet gloves, she did not know; but a young man, who had come quietly along the lane, and amusedly watched her efforts, was keenly conscious of the charming effect.

"Allow me to get the roses for you," he said, springing up the bank, and securing the blossomy bough, while she, blushing hotly, went back into the road.

The young man came to her side, presenting the flowers; but before he gave them to her, a change came over his own face, his eyes lighted up, his whole demeanour altered.

"Is it really you?" he exclaimed, "I was so afraid I should never see you again. This is indeed a fortunate encounter. Are you staying in this part of the world, may I ask?"

She murmured an assent, half confusedly, hardly knowing whether to be most glad or sorry at this meeting with the man who had come to her aid on the night of the storm. She had fancied that every link of her old life was broken—had, indeed, hoped that it might be so. Nevertheless, and in spite of this, there was less of regret than of pleasure in her heart as she recognised him.

"And you are going to make a long stay?" he added, taking his place at her side, and walking with her in the most matter-of-course fashion.

"I hope so."

"I hope so, too. I have often wondered if fate would throw us together again."

"Do you live here, then?" she asked, lifting to his those shy brown eyes, whose pathetic beauty had haunted him since the night he saw them first.

"Yes, I was born here, bred here, and I hope I shall die here—not just yet, however," he added with a slight laugh, "May I ask where you are visiting?"

"I am not visiting."

There was a half-arch, half pained smile hovering round her lips as she spoke.

"Where are you staying then?"

"At Helston Chase."

"Helston Chase?"

He repeated the word in amaze, and came to a full stop, looking at her with puzzled wonderment. "At Helston Chase!"

"Certainly, why not?"

"Because that is my home."

It was her turn to look astonished now. A

flood of red rushed over the milk-white throat and brow, her eyes fell.

"Then you are—"

"Philip Stanmore." He took off his hat, and bowed low. "And may I ask your name?"

"It is Marigold Lester. I am assistant to your housekeeper, Mr. Stanmore."

She had drawn herself up to her full height, and there was as much dignity in her voice as in her figure. For the first time she realised her position—realised that she no longer stood upon an equality with this man—that he was in effect, her employer—her master! Her pride felt the blow. Never until this moment had she understood how much she had given up in taking a position which was really only that of a higher grade servant.

That Stanmore was surprised there can be no doubt, perhaps he was a little disappointed, too, but he did his best not to show it. Still, as he walked on, there was a subtle change in his manner which she was quick to observe. It was not less respectful, but it was less that of a friend.

"In that case I shall have the pleasure of escorting you as far as the Chase," he said, with grave politeness. "I have returned home somewhat unexpectedly. I found I could leave London earlier than I anticipated, and I was delighted at the prospect of reaching home. My luggage is still at the station waiting to be sent for."

He continued talking until they reached the avenue. She returned answers for the most part monosyllabic, but she noticed that he made no sort of allusion to the circumstances under which they had met before, though there could be no doubt that he must have been struck by their peculiarity. How she wished she could frankly explain everything to him! But this would have been impossible under the circumstances, even if her tongue had not been tied by her promises to her husband.

At the end of the avenue she stopped.

"I will say good evening here, Mr. Stanmore," she said.

"But why here? You are going indoors now, are you not?" he returned in apparent surprise.

"Yes, but I shall go in at the side door, while you will enter by the principal entrance," she answered, quietly, and with a little half bow, half curtsy, she left him.

He watched her lithe figure disappear, much as he had watched the shrubs at The Gables hiding her from his view, then he shrugged his shoulders slightly as he went indoors.

"Fate has played me many odd tricks in the course of my life," he said to himself, "but none much odder than this."

If he had known the events that had taken place since his first meeting with Marigold, he might have accused fate of yet stranger caprices than he credited her with now.

CHAPTER V.

MR. STANMORE'S arrival at the Chase made a great difference to Marigold, although she would have found it difficult to explain in what the difference consisted.

It is true she saw very little of him during the next fortnight, for she made a point of keeping out of his way; but there was always the chance of her coming unexpectedly upon him, of meeting him in the grounds, or seeing him drive off in his high dog-cart, and this lent an excitement to her life at the Chase, which it had hitherto lacked.

Then, she and Mrs. Packe spent a good deal of time talking over the young master, for he was a theme on which the housekeeper was never tired of dilating, and she could not complain of not having a sympathetic listener in Marigold, who would sit opposite, darning away assiduously at her bed or table linen, and showing by a question now and again, that she took an equal interest in the subject.

"It's such a pity he doesn't marry," sighed Mrs. Packe, one sunshiny afternoon, "a good-looking, clever, well set up young man like he is—why, any lady might be proud to have him for a husband!"

"Isn't he engaged then?" asked Marigold, without lifting her eyes from her work.

"No, nor likely to be, so far as I can make out. Not that it's for lack of opportunity. There's half-a-dozen young ladies about here would give their ears to have him, but he won't see it. He's very particular. 'I must have a lady made to my own order, and the, perhaps I shall fall in love,' he said to me once, and I believe it's true. All I can say is, I hope he won't go through the wood, and pick up a crooked stick at last."

"It's to be hoped not," said Marigold. Then she added thoughtfully, as she looked out of the window, "Yes, he ought to marry. Such a fine property as this ought to have an heir."

"As to that, it has one already," returned Mrs. Packe; then she bit her lips hard, regretting the imprudence that had led her to make the admission. "But we won't talk of that," she added, hastily. "It's a forbidden subject."

Her manner was well calculated to arouse Marigold's curiosity, but the young girl had too much delicacy of feeling to pursue a topic thus tabooed. More than once afterwards she wondered at the mystery the housekeeper's words suggested; at the moment, however, she had no time to think of it, for there came a little tap at the door, and Mr. Stanmore himself entered, a blood-stained handkerchief wrapped round his hand.

"I have cut my finger with a glass bottle rather badly," he said, "I wonder whether you have any old linen handy, that you can use for binding it up, Packe?"

"Certainly, sir; I hope it is not a deep cut Mr. Philip," exclaimed the housekeeper, fussy; then she despatched Marigold in search of the linen, and worried herself into a fever of impatience while she was gone.

"Shall I examine the cut to see if there are any bits of glass remaining in it?" said Marigold, in her soft, quiet tones, as she returned with the linen. "I have attended some ambulance classes, and I know something of how to treat wounds."

"It will be very good of you if you will," replied Philip, yielding himself gratefully to her ministrations, and contrasting the composure of her manner with the fussiness of the housekeeper. The cut was on the forefinger, and was decidedly a bad one. Marigold bathed it, examined it, pressed the jagged edges of the flesh firmly together, and then bound it up with a quickness and deftness that challenged Philip's admiration.

"Some women are born nurses," he said, watching her slender, and yet strong white fingers. "You are one of them, Miss Lester."

"In that case, I am afraid I have mistaken my vocation," she answered with her pretty shy smile. "I did once think of becoming a nurse; but the thought of the pain and suffering I should witness deterred me. I am a coward."

"Not when stern necessity arises, I think. Now I am going to ask you a favour. You see this wounded finger interferes with my writing. Will you be so kind as to copy out one or two business letters for me? That is, if our good Packe can spare you," he added, smiling, indulgently at the housekeeper, who hastened to assure him of her acquiescence.

"Of course, of course, Mr. Philip! Miss Lester will be only too delighted to be of use to you; and as to sparing her, why there's really nothing for her to do. She has got over such a lot of mending since she's been here, that we shall all have a spell of idleness for awhile in consequence."

Marigold followed the young man to his study—a room lined with books, and having a writing table in the centre strewn with papers. At this table she took her seat, and proceeded to write at his dictation; but it must be confessed that Philip was very slow in telling her what to say, the fact being that he was so occupied in thinking how sweet and fair she looked in her closely fitting black dress, with its severely simple white collar and cuffs, as to almost lose sight of the object for which she was there.

Before the letter were quite finished, tea was brought in.

"You must rest from your labours awhile, and have tea with me," he said, as he dismissed the servants to fetch another cup and saucer. "You

see, my accident debars me from even pouring tea out myself. We will resume the letter-writing later on."

Marigold hesitated for a moment, but finally allowed herself to be persuaded, and took her seat in front of the tray. After all it was very delightful to have a little conversation with a clever man whose tastes for the most part coincided with hers. Mrs. Packe was a good-natured creature, but she was hardly a companion for a refined and intelligent girl, who liked to talk of art and music and literature, all of which Philip Stanmore had at his finger-ends.

"You must let me lend you the book," he said, as they were discussing a popular novel that all the world was talking about; "and I hope you will make use of my library, and take from it any work you may care to read."

"You are very good," she murmured.

"Pray don't accuse me of such a thing as goodness," he exclaimed, laughing. "I know from experience what companion's books are, and I'm afraid you often feel very dull down here. It must be so different from what you have been used to. I beg your pardon," he said, noticing the crimson-flooded cheeks and the embarrassment of her manner; "I hope I have not said anything to pain you."

For a moment she did not speak; then the words seemed to rush from her lips before she could stop them.

"You have not pained me, but you have given me an opportunity of saying something which I have long wished to say to you. You must have been very surprised to see me here; you must wonder what brought me out in the storm that night at Westpool. You must think it strange that I have cut myself off from my friends—"

"If these thoughts ever have occurred to me," he interrupted, gently; "believe me, I have at the same time assured myself that the fault—if fault there be—lies with circumstances, not with you."

"Indeed, indeed that is true!" she exclaimed, eagerly, and with a certain childish naïveté that touched him deeply. "And that is exactly what I wanted to tell you, only I did not know quite how to say it. I hate mystery, and yet I have very urgent reasons for keeping myself apart from my friends, and not letting them know where I am. I had no idea, when I came to Helston Chase, that you were its master."

"Of course not—how could you have?" he returned, with a smile. "You did not know my name any more than I knew yours. It was a mere chance that I happened to be at Westpool that night. It was the first time I had been there, and probably it will be the last." His brow darkened slightly, as if at some unpleasant remembrance, which, however, he hastened to throw from him. "Please give me another cup of tea," he said, gaily; "it is unusually good this afternoon. By the way, Miss Lester, do you play or sing?"

"I used to do both."

"I thought so. Shall I tell you why? I happened to be in the picture gallery this morning when you were dusting the china there, and I heard you break out—quite unconsciously, I am sure—into a little French *chanson* that has haunted me ever since. I have been longing to hear it again. You must sing it for me this evening, and I will accompany you on the guitar. We will go into Mrs. Packe's room. It will be a treat for the dear old lady."

After tea the letter writing was resumed, and although Philip tried his best to spin it out as long as possible, yet it was bound at last to come to an end. But even then he would not let Marigold go. There was a certain rose that he had budded himself which he wanted to show her. Accordingly they went out into the rose garden, and loitered about until the soft-scented dusk of the summer evening closed in around them, and the stars began to glimmer faintly in the fathomless blue above their heads. Then Philip suggested an adjournment to the housekeeper's room, and brought down his guitar, to the great delight of Mrs. Packe, who proposed to have the lamp lighted.

"Certainly not," said Philip, "this twilight is delicious. The lamp would spoil the effect of the

music;" and although in this the housekeeper did not agree, she "knew her place too well," as she would have said, to contradict her master.

Philip struck a few opening bars on the guitar, then Marigold's sweet clear voice—a little unsteady at first from nervousness—joined in, and filled the dusk with its melody.

Song after song was tried, and, when at last Philip rose to go, the stable clock was striking ten.

"I really do believe Mr. Philip has thoroughly enjoyed the evening," exclaimed Mrs. Packe, in immense delight as her master's footsteps died away; but she would have been very greatly surprised if she had known how thorough had been his enjoyment of it!

CHAPTER VI.

It happened after this that Marigold saw a good deal of Philip Stanmore, whether by accident or design, she could hardly have told.

For her own part she tried to put away all those vague fears that had so often beset her, and to enjoy the peaceful summer days, with their pleasant duties and congenial companionship.

She resolutely refrained from analysing her own feelings, or asking herself the meaning of the new joy that had crept into her life.

The past was bitter enough, and the future might be equally bitter; but these golden days of the present should not be marred by either, she would enjoy them to the full.

One evening, about a fortnight after Philip's accident to his finger, she was returning from the village through the plantation that bordered the park.

It was between seven and eight o'clock; but already it was growing dusk for the sky was dark with thunder clouds, and every now and again a low ominous rumbling presaged the coming storm.

The air, too, was close and heavy, and perhaps this may have had something to do with the unusual feeling of fatigue that made Marigold glad to take advantage of the seat a fallen tree trunk provided her with, and rest for a little while.

Thus seated she was screened by low bending branches from the path, although she was able at the same time to obtain a pretty good view of anyone going by. Not that anyone was likely to pass for this was an extremely unfrequented part of the Helston grounds, and very rarely crossed even by the labourers on the estate.

Of this fact Marigold was aware, and she was all the more astonished when a rustling of the leaves warned her of someone's approach.

Instinctively she drew yet farther back, and at the same moment a tall man, wearing a brown tweed suit and a large felt hat pulled low over his brows passed by, without even suspecting her vicinity.

His figure struck her by its resemblance to her husband's; but a second scrutiny tended to reassure her. Cyril Gascoigne was fair, this man had a dark beard and moustache and dark hair.

Nevertheless she stayed some time to let the stranger have time to get away, and then walked slowly and thoughtfully along the darkening wood until she was met by Philip Stanmore.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with a sigh of relief. "I thought I should find you here. I went towards the village along the lane to meet you, and one of the gamekeepers said he had seen you enter the plantation. See, I have brought your cloak and umbrella. I was so afraid you would be caught in the storm."

"You are very good to me," she murmured gratefully, as she let him help her on with the waterproof.

"Am I?" he returned. "It is a form of selfishness, I assure you, for I am never happier than when I am permitted to be of service to you."

Her eyes were lowered, so she did not see the ardent expression in his, still there was a tone in his voice that seemed to send strange thrills of pleasure coursing like quicksilver through her veins, and she felt, though she did not acknowledge, that the mere sense of his presence brought happiness with it.

For a little while they walked on in silence, broken at intervals by the low rumbling of the thunder, or the plaintive twitter of frightened birds. Marigold grew nervous—not at the storm, but at the spell of silence. She broke it abruptly, and with an uneasy laugh.

"It seems to be my fate to meet you in bad weather, Mr. Stanmore."

He stopped suddenly, and stood before her in the path, thus preventing her from going on. His face was pale with excess of feeling, his voice, when he spoke, was slightly unsteady.

"You speak of fate, Miss Lester. Do you believe in fate?"

Some of his excitement communicated itself to her.

She shivered a little.

"What do you mean, Mr. Stanmore? Fate is a word that admits of many interpretations."

"To me it has but one. It is a force outside ourselves that drives us onward and bends us to its will in spite of all our endeavours in an opposite direction. It is the power that moulds our lives. It threw us together on that night of the storm at Westpool, it brought you to Helston, it has overcome all obstacles that I in my blindness would have put in its way, and it forces me now to speak out the words that are in my heart, Marigold, I love you!"

His hand was on her arm, he drew her gently forward until she lay on his breast, until she could feel the heavy beating of his heart against her own.

A mad intoxicating rush of joy enveloped her. For a moment she gave way to it, she let it have complete dominion over her. She forgot everything in this supreme delight—these few seconds snatched from Paradise.

"Darling, darling!" whispered Philip, straining her yet closer to him; "you love me—say you do. Tell me that you will be my wife!"

His wife! The words fell on her ears with an icy chill, bringing back to her the remembrance of the past, of the barrier between them, of the sin of listening to his declaration of passion—she who was a wife already.

She wrenched herself forcibly from his arms, while her very lips grew pallid.

Philip looked at her in amazement.

"Ah, what have I done!" she cried out, wringing her hands together. "For the moment I had forgotten how wicked it was to let you say this to me."

"Wicked!" he repeated. "I don't understand you. Where is the wickedness of it?"

"Because," her voice fell almost to a whisper, and yet the words sounded cruelly clear and distinct to Philip's ears, "because I am married already!"

She covered her face with her hands, and remained thus for a little while waiting for him to speak. But she waited in vain for he said not one word, and at length she looked up to see him standing, with his back against a tree, a curious ashen pallor in his cheeks. Surely never had man changed so much in a few short minutes.

He actually looked years older. The despair in his eyes was terrible to witness, it cut poor Marigold to the heart.

"Ah, forgive me—forgive me!" she cried, throwing herself at his feet. "I have been to blame for letting matters come to this, and indeed if I had suspected the truth I would have gone away long ago. I would never have risked bringing such misery upon you. But I did not see the danger, I would not even let myself suspect it. I went on in my fool's paradise resolutely putting from me all thoughts of the future. But I will go away, I will leave the Chase, and in time you will forget and forgive me."

He raised her very gently, but the pain in his face had not lessened.

"Yes," he said in a strange cold voice that hardly seemed to belong to him, "you must go away, it will be better so. But, first of all, answer me this one question, were you married when I saw you first?"

"No."

"I am glad of that. Now, leave me; I will follow you a little later on, when," he added, with a faint attempt at a smile, "I have learned to control myself better."

She obeyed without another word, but as she went she was wondering whether she should tell him her whole story.

With a rare tact and delicacy he had refrained from asking her a single question regarding her marriage—her mad, foolish marriage, whose grim shadow would darken the rest of her life.

She must leave the Chase without delay.

Where she would go, and what she would do, were after considerations regarding which she would not allow herself to think.

The prospect of being tossed once more on the cruel waves of the world, was not a pleasant one, but it had no room in her thoughts.

What indeed could fate have in store for her more bitter than the pain she had seen in Philip's eyes, the pain she felt in her own heart at the prospect of leaving him?

For she acknowledged the truth now.

She loved him with the whole fervour of her nature, with all the ardour of which she was capable.

Her fancy for Cyril Gasgoine in the first days of their acquaintanceship was as a dim grey shadow before this flesh and blood reality, palpitating with passionate life.

She had reached the limit of the wood, and was standing in front of the gates leading to the park, when a sharp, clear report fell on the air.

Just at first she thought it was the thunder, but a little reflection assured her that this could hardly be the case. She paused to listen, and it seemed to her a faint call for help followed.

The report had been that of a pistol, and the cry came from a wounded man—from Philip perhaps.

A lapwing could hardly have been fleetier than Marigold, as she turned back, and ran through the wood to the place where she had left him, and where she found him now—no longer standing upright, but prone on the moss, a red stain soaking slowly through his coat, his face even more ghastly than it had been when she saw it last.

In a moment she was on the ground beside him, raising him in her arms, all other thoughts forgotten in the one great fear of his peril.

Very slowly he opened his eyes.

"Is it you, Marigold? I am glad you have come. Don't leave me—promise you won't leave me!" he muttered, thickly and disconnectedly, and she, in an agony of fear and of love gave the required promise.

His eyes closed again, his head fell heavily against her shoulder. Good Heavens! was he dead?

Marigold could have shrieked aloud in her terror, but she feared to disturb him by the faintest sound.

She opened his waistcoat, and with her handkerchief tried to staunch the blood that was oozing slowly from a wound in his chest, and having done this, there was nothing else for her to do, but stay there, supporting him in her arms until help came.

Surely they would be missed, and Mrs. Packe would send someone down from the Chase in search of them.

By this time the storm had come in good earnest. Long, forked shafts of light quivered across the sky, followed by deep, reverberating peals of thunder.

The heavy raindrops plashed against the leaves of the trees overhead, and soaked slowly through them down on Marigold and her insensible companion.

She did her best to shield him, bending over him so as to keep the rain from his face, and heedless of her own wet and draggled condition—heedless indeed of everything save his peril.

Who had shot him? she wondered, and then the thought struck her that perhaps the assassin might still be lurking about—maybe he was watching her at that very minute from the shelter of the trees.

Instinctively her arms clasped themselves closer round the unconscious man.

If he were struck again it should be through her body!

And so the weary moments dragged themselves by. How long it was before one of the men sent

by Mrs. Packe appeared, she could hardly afterwards have told, but at length help came, and Philip, still unconscious, was carried back to his home, and laid on the bed from which it seemed probable he would never rise again.

Then followed a terrible time of suspense and anxiety, during which Marigold hardly ever quitted the wounded man's side.

She was, as he had once told her, a born nurse, and she tended him with a skill and devotion which, the doctor said, saved his life.

Had the shot struck him an inch higher or lower it must inevitably have been fatal; as it was, with every care and attention, he was after some days pronounced out of danger and Marigold had time to think of her position, and what she must do.

Meanwhile the police were sparing no effort to solve the mystery of who had fired the shot, and moreover, they were very confident of success.

CHAPTER VII.

THE very day after the doctor had assured Marigold that Philip would recover, a letter was brought to her addressed in a strange handwriting. She looked at it suspiciously, and with a queer sinking of the heart before she opened it. Its contents ran thus,—

"MY DEAR WIFE,

"The time has come for me to repent of the bargain made on our wedding day. I find I cannot so easily put you out of my heart. In spite of the disappointment I naturally felt at your penniless condition I still love you, and ask you to come and share my life. Circumstances have, oddly enough, put me in possession of your whereabouts, you will however, have the goodness to leave Helston Chase as soon as you receive this and come up to London by the two o'clock train which I will meet at Paddington. Till then, adieu. In case of any unwillingness on your part—which, however, I do not anticipate—I shall be under the necessity of journeying down to the Chase to fetch you.

"Your loving and penitent husband,

"CYRIL."

The letter had been brought to her in her own room, and luckily she was alone when she read it. If good Mrs. Packe had seen her she would have been frightened at the white face and startled eyes of her young assistant.

Go back to Cyril—to the man who had shamed and insulted her—the man she would never willingly see again! oh, it was impossible, impossible.

And yet what alternative had she if he chose to exercise the authority which he undoubtedly possessed over her? She was his wife, and the law would hold it her duty to be with him. If she refused to go, he would come down to the Chase and claim her.

Poor Marigold wrung her hands with frantic despair at the idea, and paced wildly backwards and forwards, trying to think what she had better do.

There was no one to whom she could go for advice; even if Philip had been in his usual health she could hardly have appealed to him, but as it was, such a proceeding was quite out of the question. There seemed to be but one course open to her—to leave the Chase instantly, and go to some fresh place where Cyril Gasgoine could not find her.

"I will never live with him—never—never!" she muttered, half aloud, between her set teeth, "I would rather die than go back to him."

It is hardly to be wondered at that she should recoil from the idea. Whatever of girlish liking she may have had for Gasgoine, had died a natural death under the influence of his cruel words on their wedding-day, and even if Philip Stanmore had not taught her what true love really was, she would still have preferred any alternative to returning to her husband.

With feverish haste she packed her few belongings, bitter tears falling on them the

while. Then she hastily scribbled a few lines to Philip,—

"You are convalescent now, and so I leave you. It is better for both that I should go. Heaven bless you both now and in the future. MARIGOLD."

She kissed the little note as she sealed it up, and then went silently to Philip's room, and looked in.

He was lying on a couch apparently asleep, but she dared not advance further than the threshold; and after placing her note on a table just inside, she silently withdrew, blinded by a mist of scalding tears.

"Farewell, dear love," she murmured, beneath her breath, throwing out her hands with a piteous gesture of passionate grief. "Farewell, love and happiness!"

And then, taking her bag, she stole quietly out of the house, through a side door, and down the avenue, trusting to chance to escape unobserved.

She reminded herself of a fugitive fleeing from justice, as she took advantage of the shadow of the trees, glancing round apprehensively now and then, and wondering whether any girl of nineteen had ever before passed through such manifold experiences.

There was nothing for her to look forward to, nothing to hope for—except, indeed, escape from her husband's power.

Instead of going to the Helston station, she decided to walk to W—, a distance of three or four miles, where there was a big junction, and where, consequently, she would be less likely to attract notice.

From there she would take a ticket to Liverpool. Her choice of this city—to her unknown—was dictated by the fact that the American steamers started from there, and she might possibly stand a chance of crossing the Atlantic as companion, or maid to some lady who required an attendant. For only when the sea was between them would she feel safe from Cyril Gasgoine.

In order to get to W— she had to pass through the plantation where Philip had been fired at, and whether from the associations of the place, or from her own nervousness cannot be said, but she was haunted by an idea of being followed. Once or twice she fancied she heard the leaves rustle behind, but on both occasions when she looked back, she could see no one.

"It is only fancy," she said to herself, reassuringly. "Cyril wrote to me from London, and who else would be likely to follow me?"

Nevertheless she frequently turned round when she was in the high road, which so far as she could see was absolutely deserted, and as she arrived at the junction and took her ticket for Liverpool, she breathed more freely.

"It was late at night when the train reached its destination, and poor Marigold, weary, lonely and heartsick found herself wondering where she had better go to get a night's lodging. A very desolate little figure she looked in her black dress, holding her bag in her hand as she got out of the compartment, and stared vaguely about the unfamiliar station.

Suddenly a heavy hand was laid on her arm. She turned round with a faint shriek to find herself confronted by a tall, fair man of middle age with cold blue eyes, and a wicked sneering mouth—her stepfather, Robert Craven.

"You!" she exclaimed, in as much amazement as terror.

"Yes, it is I—an unexpected pleasure for you, my dear Marigold. It is some time since we met, but I cannot congratulate myself on your delight at this encounter. You are alone, I see, I will therefore take charge of your bag, and give you my arm if you will permit me. It is rather late for a young and pretty woman to be wandering about by herself."

Marigold drew back resolutely.

"I do not choose to come with you," she exclaimed, at which he smiled the old mocking smile she remembered so well.

"My dear, you surely will not be foolish enough to make a scene. A lady running away from her husband—I think that is the position in which you find yourself—will not get much

sympathy from the law-abiding British public. Besides, Mr. Gasgoine himself may have something to say in the matter—ah, here he comes!"

And looking in the direction he indicated, Marigold saw no less a person than her husband advancing to meet her. Craven's grasp on her arm tightened.

"You see you are met at all points, my child," he went on in the same suave tone. "You contrived to get the better of me, and of your husband too, when you played against us singly, but I am really of opinion that you will find it very difficult to checkmate us now that we act together."

The poor child's heart sank. She looked round helplessly, despairingly. No fluttering bird ever caught in a net could be more absolutely powerless. A dark mist rose before her eyes, and in a half-conscious state, she was led by her stepfather to a cab, and joined by Cyril Gasgoine, who gave some direction to the cabman in too low a voice to be overheard.

When she fully recovered, she found herself in a small, meanly furnished room, the shutters of which were barred. It was lighted by a paraffin lamp, whose rays fell on the threadbare glories of green rep covered chairs and sofa; and on Cyril Gasgoine's face as he sat opposite to her. Her stepfather had disappeared.

"So you thought you were running away from me instead of into my arms!" he said, with a low laugh. "You miscalculated my talents, my dear wife—and my affection."

She repeated the word scornfully. As she looked at this man's face, sensuous and evil for all its handsome features, and compared it with Philip's whereon an honest, upright soul had impressed itself so clearly, she wondered how she could ever have found it possible to accept Cyril Gasgoine as a husband, even for the sake of escaping her stepfather's tyranny.

"You may spare yourself the trouble of pretending affection," she said, drawing as far away from him as possible. "Whatever may be your motive for wishing me with you, it is assuredly not that."

"Oh, fie, Marigold! Those are not the sentiments of a loving wife."

"They are not indeed! Do you think it possible I can feel anything but loathing and contempt for you? If so, you are grievously mistaken. I tell you, Cyril Gasgoine, I have grown to hate the very sight of you, and nothing on earth shall induce me to remain with you!"

His face darkened, but he shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Those are your sentiments at the present moment, perhaps, but they will change with time—when you have learned to forget Philip Stanmore, maybe."

She started violently.

What did he know—what could he know of Philip?

He laughed as he interpreted her expression.

"You will observe that I am fairly well informed as to your goings on since we parted. After all, you know my dear girl, I was very fond of you, and although I may have said some unpleasant things on our wedding-day, in the first shock of discovering that you were not the heiress I imagined you to be, such things really don't count for anything. Come, be reasonable. We may have a very happy future before us, if you will leave off these heroics, and consent to let bygones be bygones. Anyhow, I am your husband, and I am not at all inclined to forego my rights. So give me a kiss in token of our complete reconciliation."

He attempted to embrace her, but she sprang back, and thus placed the table between them.

Her resistance only made Gasgoine the more determined.

With an oath, he pushed the table on one side, and Marigold recognised with icy despair that she was absolutely at his mercy.

She looked round desperately, and her eye fell on a quaint steel engraved foreign-looking dagger fastened against the wall, apparently with a view to ornamentation—left there perhaps by some sailor who had brought it from abroad. In an instant she had seized it, and held it before her threateningly.

"If you come one step nearer, I will stab you!" she cried, incoherently, hardly knowing what she said or did in her excitement.

Gasgoine treated the threat with contempt—probably he thought it was merely uttered to intimidate him—and tried to seize her round the waist.

He desisted suddenly, however, as a warm spurt of blood from the fleshy part of his arm bore witness at once to her determination, and to the fact that he was really wounded.

True, the wound was a slight one, still it was enough to assure him that he had a desperate woman to deal with—one who would not hesitate at trifles.

"You spitfire!" he exclaimed, and a vindictive curse fell from his lips as he turned back the cuffs of his coat and shirt to staunch the blood. "You shall pay for this, sooner or later, of that I give you my word," he added, and then watching his opportunity, he seized both her hands, and wrenched the dagger away from her before she even guessed his purpose. "What a fool you must be to think to match your strength with mine! But you have succeeded very effectually in crushing all affectionate desires on my part. I will leave you alone until you come to a more reasonable frame of mind, but I warn you that in the end you will have to submit, for I am not the sort of man to be defied with impunity—as the fact of my meeting you at the station to-night ought to have assured you. Do you wonder what brought me there? Well, I will tell you, and then perhaps you will have some respect for the intelligence with which I laid my plans. It struck me that it was on the cards you might not obey my summons to London, also that you would leave Helston Chase immediately so as to get beyond reach of my pursuit. Therefore I asked your stepfather—who, although he is a recent acquaintance, is nevertheless a very good friend of mine—to be at Helston before my letter arrived, and keep watch, and as a matter-of-fact he followed you to the station, learned from the clerk at the ticket office where you had booked to, and forthwith wired to me to come at once to Liverpool, while he travelled in the next compartment to you. The journey from London to Liverpool does not take so long as that from W—, and so, good luck aiding me, I was here nearly an hour earlier than you, and had time to secure these apartments before your arrival. They are not exactly sumptuous perhaps, but they answer my purpose very well, and after all, it does not much matter as we shall be in them such a very short time. To-morrow I shall endeavour to secure berths in the City of — which will land us in New York in less than a fortnight, and we'll begin a new life together in the New World. You observe my plans are all matured, and I think I may say all emergencies are provided for. Do not my diplomatic talents provoke your admiration?"

Marigold did not answer this question—addressed to her in satirical accents. She was standing against the wall facing him, one spot of crimson burning like fire in either cheek. Baffled she might be for the moment, but she was not yet conquered. Gasgoine meanwhile, had tied a handkerchief tightly round his arm, and having done this, walked to the window and examined the shutters which were fastened with a padlock. He continued his investigations in the adjoining apartment, which was furnished as a bedroom, and then returned.

"I'll leave you now to think over the folly of trying to outwit me. In the morning you'll be more amenable to discipline—and less bloodthirsty."

And he quitted the room, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARIGOLD's first action after he had gone was to examine doors and windows in both apartments.

They were all fastened in such a way as to defy her efforts, and recognising this she returned to the sitting-room, and sat down, gazing blankly

before her, and feeling horribly helpless and impotent.

Gasgoine had calculated well in telling her of the success of his plans, for their narration had gone far towards assuring her that she had a man as clever as he was unscrupulous to deal with; look which way she would, she could see no prospect of escape.

No one could help her—not even Philip. She was Gasgoine's wife, and if he chose to take her to America with him he had a perfect right to do so.

For some hours poor Marigold, weary alike in body and mind, sat there, going over the ground again and again, but always coming back to the same point.

Yes, there was no help for it, she would have to submit to destiny—and her husband.

Why he should so suddenly have made up his mind to recall her she could not imagine, but she suspected the reason must have something to do with his recent friendship with her father.

The two men had a joint interest in getting her under their control—what it was she could not even guess.

"If I were rich it would be different, but as it is, it seems inexplicable," she murmured to herself, and then the remembrance of Cyril's words regarding Philip Stanmore flashed across her.

Was it possible he had been down at Helston, and seen her and Philip together, or did he get his information from Robert Craven?

Her handkerchief had fallen to the floor, and as she stooped to pick it up, she noticed a black Gladstone bag pushed under the sofa on which she had been sitting.

It was her husband's, left there inadvertently, and it struck Marigold that there was just a possibility it might contain some instrument by whose aid she could force back the lock of the door.

If she could once get outside she might still contrive to escape him. Luckily, for her purpose, the key of the bag was in the lock, and in a few minutes she had tumbled the whole contents out on the floor, and was eagerly sorting them.

For the most part they consisted of personal apparel; but, wrapped up in some woollen garments was a long narrow case, which was unaccountably heavy.

The young girl opened it, and found inside a six-chambered revolver, silver-mounted, and with the initials "C. S." engraved upon it. Above the initials was a crest—a mailed arm, with a dagger, and the motto "Stand firm."

In her astonishment she almost let the revolver fall from her grasp, for the crest was that of the Stanmore family, while the initials might also be supposed to be theirs. How did it come into her husband's possession?

Suddenly it flashed across her that the curious sense of familiarity, which had struck her in Gasgoine, when he was first introduced to her, was due to the resemblance his voice bore to Philip Stanmore's.

They were not alike in feature, and yet when she came to think of it there was a sort of fleeting resemblance which might well stand for a family likeness. Cyril had confessed his name was not "Gasgoine"—what more likely than that he was the "heir" of whom Mrs. Packe had once spoken with such evident reluctance—the black sheep of the family?

And Philip's visit to Westpool on the night she first met him had been due to his relative's presence there.

Yes, Marigold felt sure this must be so. She carefully put the revolver on one side, and proceeded with her examination, which was destined to yield her another surprise, for, on diving into a side pocket of the bag, she pulled forth nothing more nor less than a complete wig and beard of rough black hair.

For a moment she gazed at it with very natural repulsion; but almost immediately her quick wits seized on it as the missing link in a chain of evidence.

It was the one worn by her husband on the evening of Philip's accident, and it was Cyril himself whom she had seen walking through the plantation some little time before the treacherous

shot was fired. *Cyril was the would-be assassin of Philip Stanmore!*

Marigold's brain reeled as the truth flashed upon her. Instinctively she felt it was the truth, and though it did not elucidate Cyril's desire to have his wife with him it went far towards explaining his proposed flight to America.

Mechanically she began putting the things back in the bag in the same order as she had taken them out.

There was nothing which could help her to force back the lock, and she thought it might be better for the present at any rate, to keep her husband in ignorance of how much she knew. Later on her knowledge might prove useful to her.

By this time the first cold gleams of daylight were forcing their way through the barred shutters, making the sordid little room look inexpressibly dreary, and reminding Marigold that for twenty-four hours she had had no sleep.

She lay down on the couch and tried to close her eyes, but without success. Thought was too busy within her for sleep's gentle poppies to visit her tired lids.

She could only ponder over the strange chain of events that had linked her fate with Philip's, and shrink with a still deeper horror than before from the man who was her husband, and who had so nearly stained his soul with the crime of murder.

At about nine o'clock he came in, bringing with him a tray on which breakfast was set. After putting it down on the table he unlocked the padlock of the shutters and threw them open. The window looked out on the street, so he decided there was no danger of his wife trying to escape from it in broad daylight, though he had provided against the contingency in the darkness.

He drew his Gladstone from under the sofa, and took it out with him. Apparently it did not occur to him to suspect that she might already have acquainted herself with its contents.

(Continued on page 596.)

THE SECRETS AND SHADOWS OF CASTLEGRANGE.

—20—

CHAPTER XXXII.

ONE afternoon, during the time that Bertie and Mr. Aragon were away on board the house-boat at Meadows Norton, Felicia and I were sitting together, not exactly busy, and not exactly idle, in our pretty boudoir in the tower.

The air out of doors was sultry and still; and, as Selina Ann remarked, felt "thunderous." The sun was sullen and had a brazen glow; the dun clouds, which hid it occasionally, took menacing and fantastic animal-like shapes as they travelled heavily onward athwart the sky.

The old world flowers in Dame Lucy's garden looked limp and arid from the long drought, and the note of a robin perched solitary there on the garlanded sun-dial sounded shrill and thin and peevish, lacking its customary sweetness, as if the small feathered creature were half timorous of the threatened storm.

No sound that we could hear, save the pipe of the robin, disturbed the brooding hot noon silence out of doors.

Felicia Luck sat at the davenport near the open window, with her back towards me. Her head rested in her left hand; in her right she held a pen. Now and then she yawned; or perchance sighed; and now and then I heard the listless scratching of her quill as it moved over the note-paper upon the desk before her.

"Bah—poof!" said she presently, without looking round, "the weather makes one dull and stupid, I suppose. What do you think I am doing, Hebe; or rather trying to do?"

"I am sure I cannot guess, darling, if you are not writing a letter," I answered.

"I am composing," was Felicia's extraordinary rejoinder, uttered in a tired sing-song sort of tone—"that is, I am concocting an advertisement to

send to the *Times* and the *Morning Post*. But somehow I can't say precisely what I wish, in the way I wish, don't you know? My ideas are sluggish this afternoon. Yet listen! How will this do? 'Wanted, at an early date, by a young —'"

I gasped then, and found my tongue again. I rose swiftly, ran over to the davenport, and dropped on my knees by Felicia's chair.

"Felicia," I cried, looking earnestly, searchingly, into her rather pale and weary face, "what nonsense are you talking—what on earth do you mean? Felicia, I do believe that you have been crying! Tell me everything this minute!"

And she calmly did so, after dabbing her eyes a little roughly with her pocket-handkerchief as if in irritation at her own weakness.

She said that she had been thinking of it, day and night, for a considerable while past, although she had said nothing to anyone; and at length had determined to think and waver no more, but to be up and doing, brave and energetic, as a sensible person in her circumstances should.

Her conscience, she said, told her that she had already been too long a guest at Castlegrange; that it was unpardonably ill-bred, a matter indeed of questionable delicacy and fine feeling, to go on thus, day after day, week after week, month after month, trespassing upon the hospitality, taking mean advantage of the good-nature, of Mr. Tressillian, the master of the house.

"I detest a sponge!" said Felicia gloomily; "and that is what I am at the present time."

"Go on," I put in ironically, "please."

She said in continuation that she was no thrifty soul—alas! she knew it, and her purse was getting lean—her small capital, she confessed had by this time dwindled to something between twenty and thirty pounds.

Of course she could not go out into the world without a penny; and therefore if so disastrous a state of things was to be avoided, the sooner she found something suitable in the way of a situation, and made a start in it, the better. No one would take her with an empty pocket.

"I have no doubt Mr. Tressillian will say a good word for me, and I know, too, that Madame Adolphe will do the same," said Felicia forlornly. "Yes, I dare say I shall 'worry along' somehow."

"And pray what kind of situation do you mean to get, dear?" I inquired.

I spoke quietly; but in reality the feeling uppermost in my breast just then was one of mingled anger and dismay—dismay at what, in these first moments of impatience and pained surprise, seemed to me downright selfishness, not to say cruelty, on the part of Felicia Luck, in thus contemplating a sudden desertion of me and leaving me alone and friendless at Castlegrange!

Oh, what in the world should I do without her, I wondered, with a qualm of real alarm! I should miss her horribly. I should be so lonely when she was gone. I should be nervous and frightened at night, I thought, all by myself in these remote western rooms of ours. I should be scared at shadows even in the twilight, and in all probability—

Felicia however cut short these disquieting reflections by saying,—

"Oh, I predict that some hateful old woman or other will eventually get hold of me as her 'companion'—Heaven help me! I would sooner be a housemaid, and scrub stairs and floors, than be some poor down-trodden drudge of a governess. I would, Hebe—"

"Felicia, darling," I broke in piteously, putting my arms about her waist as I knelt there by her chair, "you shall not go; I will not hear of it or allow it—I won't! It is cruel and unkind of you to talk of leaving me! How can you find the heart to do it, Felicia!"

"Hebe, sweet," she answered mournfully, "be reasonable. You seem to forget that I have to earn my own living; that I must set to work and earn money somehow—sooner or later. So why not make a beginning at once, then, and get the wrench over with as little delay as possible? Only the other day, from something she said—I forget what it was exactly, now—I gathered

distinctly that the opinion of Mrs. Vasper on the question is, that I have been here with you a great deal too long; that, at any rate so far as she herself is concerned, I have outstayed my welcome at Castlegrange."

"Mrs. Vasper!" I exclaimed indignantly. "Who is Mrs. Vasper? It is Julian, and not she, who is master here. And, Felicia, you know that he said when you first came that you were to remain our guest in this house just as long as ever you might feel disposed to do so. You know he did; and he would never have said it if he had not meant it."

"But, darling," said Felicia sensibly; "this you *must* see. Where is the good of my staying on with you in happy idleness, here at this grand old place, until every penny of my money is gone—oh?"

All on a sudden a bright thought came to me. It was an inspiration—nothing less! I sprang upright, my heart beating rapidly with suppressed excitement.

"Felicia, you said just now that you meant to go and be 'companion' to some disagreeable old woman or other. Now wouldn't a young one, not wholly unpleasant and exacting, suit you infinitely better, dear?"

"Catch her, first," answered Felicia absently, drawing a little imp with horns and tail upon her blotting-pad, "and you'll pretty soon see."

Before she could say more, or guess my intention, I had left the sitting-room and was out in the corridor. Julian, I knew, was generally to be found alone in the library at this hour; and thither I made my way as fleetly as my feet could bear me. I knew perfectly well also that if I gave myself time for cooler reflection, and pondered the matter in hand before broaching it to my kinsman himself, I should lose my courage in the interim and probably be unable to find it again; and then all opportunity and hope perhaps would likewise be gone for ever! There is no time like the present, says the trite old maxim—and he who hesitates is lost!

I had grown accustomed now to the sorrowful idea that the sight of me was painful to Julian, my presence to him more than distasteful; in every wise so like the dead Doreen, his "lost Lenore," was I!

This being, then, unhappily and irremediably so, the briefer the *tête-à-tête* interview between us two, the more satisfactory to both of us!

I found him reading in a chair as big and high and shadowy in outline that at first view of the wide dull room his figure in it was hardly distinguishable.

Here in the dim old library, as in our own bright tower sitting-room, the windows were open; and the clustering wall-creepers, enfeebled in the windless heat, drooped by and over the tinted lattices pushed outward into their midst.

I had knocked; but had waited for no permission to enter.

"Hebe!"

"Yes—L." I spoke hurriedly, incoherently; I was trembling with nervousness and fright that were simply unconquerable. "I have a favour—a great favour to ask. Julian, do—do not deny it!"

"That is hardly likely. What is it, Hebe?" How I performed my errand I do not know; I cannot in the least remember; nor for the life of me could I have told just afterwards.

But it was all over and settled in a few sharp, pregnant moments, as it were; and then I have a vivid recollection of snatching blindly at one of Julian's hands, and kissing it boldly, to show my gratitude, though in a speechless, mumbling, imbecile sort of fashion, I fear—the next instant rushing headlong from my kinsman's presence, to regain, breathless with joy and precipitation, our boudoir in the tower.

Felicia now was crying quietly there; with her arms stretched over the davenport and her face hidden upon them—an attitude of utter dejection.

"Felicia, cheer up!" I panted—"and look up too, darling! I am the bearer of good tidings, Felicia; because—because, if you will have it so, we never need be parted from each other—never, dearest, after all! Julian says that I may ask you to stay at Castlegrange, and be my 'companion'

for ever and ever!—and—and forgive me, Felicia dearest, for—for mentioning the horrid money part of it all, but Julian says that, if the proposal is in every manner satisfactory to you, your salary here with me will be one hundred and twenty-five pounds a year."

When at last we were more composed, and could once more think and talk and comfort ourselves generally like rational human beings, Felicia said solemnly:

"Hebe, I hope and pray that I may not be tempted to make a fool of myself when we meet—Mr. Tressillian and I—in the hall or in the drawing-room by and by. It would be shocking, would it not—and what, I wonder, would Mrs. Vasper say!—if I were to fall upon his neck and kiss him outright; and that is precisely how I feel towards him at the present moment, dear!"

"No; do not do that," I said, laughing a little hysterically still, and it might be not yet quite easy in mind on the score of my own somewhat intemperate behaviour down in the library a short while before.

"Have no fear," answered Felicia, earnestly now. "I will at once write him a grateful little note, and despatch it straightway to the library by Selina Ann. That will be the better, the more delicate way, altogether."

And I agreed with Felicia that it would.

And so that was how Felicia Luck began life in earnest as a "salaried companion" to an old school-fellow; and she used to say laughingly, in later years, that her "situation" in the Tressillian family was the only one she had ever had, and that she had never wanted another—it was her first situation and her last. Which was true.

Mrs. Vasper, on that memorable evening, thought fit to appear in her place at the dinner-table; and when she heard of our new arrangement respecting the future of Felicia Luck the expression of silent disgust which overspread her stony pale face was something, as Felicia herself said afterwards, to enjoy and remember for the rest of one's days!

Dinner over, Mr. Tressillian limped away into the library again, and Mrs. Vasper faded from view up the great old stairway in the baron's hall. So finding it dull and oppressive within the house, I and Felicia by and by together wandered out into the courtyard to obtain if possible a whiff of fresh air.

But even in the quadrangle, in the twilight by the lilled old fountain, no ghost of a breeze seemed to be stirring to-night; and the dark water glistening beneath the flat broad leaves was as still and unwrinkled as the marble rim itself.

Hardly conscious whether our footsteps were guiding us, we strolled leisurely onward and out into the park, where never a leaf was sighing even amid the foliage of the mighty trees.

No star was visible in the sullen heavens. But a ragged bar of vermillion, lying low in the west, and looking like a fiery rent or slit in a canopy of gloom, marked the lurid region where the sun had dropped down.

We stood just then upon a knoll in the forest boundary that was overshadowed by one of its finest beeches—nearly a mile perhaps from the house, and somewhere, we fancied, in the neighbourhood of the scene of our painter-friends' recent encampment.

The light was fast glooming. One could scarcely breathe. The atmosphere was hazy and charged with storm.

"Do you know, I don't half like it," Felicia was muttering; when, even as she spoke, a sharp, quivering flash of steel-blue lightning lit up the whole land with awful unexpectedness; and just for one vivid ghostly second or two we saw the ink shapes of grotesquely bounding cattle, as if by the white glare of electric light against a background of zinc.

No thunder-clap or rain drop followed, however; but immediately afterwards the air around us seemed to grow warmer and thicker than ever—smelt vaguely sulphurous indeed, volcanic, in brief murderous. One felt stifled now.

"You are right," I said then to Felicia; "and I don't like it either. Those bucking, jumping cattle over yonder may, in present circumstances,

be harmless enough—there's no telling; but I am certain that these huge old trees are not. Nothing indeed could be more dangerous. And listen—they are beginning to stir and groan! Let us run home—"

"Just as hard as we can go!" ended Felicia with alacrity—suiting the action to the word.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BEFORE we could reach the safe shelter of the mansion the storm-wind uprose, the rain drops fell heavily, as large as oak-apples; and soon, as a matter of course, our thin summer frocks were drenched.

So, meeting no one either in the quadrangle or in the hall, we ran on straightway upstairs to our own rooms; to exchange our wet garments for dry ones, and to find Selina Ann there in readiness to attend to us both.

She had heard from Willis the footman that we had gone out into the park; and she had sensibly guessed that we should be overtaken by the storm.

But we saw nothing more of Mr. Tressillian that night. He did not know that we had left the house after dinner; and so naturally felt no anxiety concerning us when the sky-gloom deepened and the rain came down.

"I pity Mrs. Vasper to-night, miss," said Selina Ann in her simple way. "Don't you?"

"Why?" asked Felicia quickly, before I could put the question myself.

"Well, miss, you see, because of that poor Miss Knowles," was the reply. "For whenever there's thunder in the air, they say that it upsets her frightfully, and she suffers miseries untold with her nerves and that, poor lady! They are safe to be up all night with her if the storm gets any worse; and if she is strong enough to leave her bed, I shouldn't wonder if she walked."

"Good gracious," shuddered Felicia—"not this way, I hope!"

"Oh no, Miss Luck," Selina Ann explained. "I meant in the great hall, you know, to the tune of the organ like. But the poor lady is so sadly weak and ill, from all accounts, that I should hardly expect she'd be able to manage that now."

Every now and then the thunder grumbled afar, like the growl of some sullen savage beast in captivity; and at brief intervals, in the boudoir, where a solitary lamp was burning dimly, we saw the lightning, in flickers of silver-white, spasmodically playing over and glancing into the obscurest corners of the room—reminding one somewhat of the effects produced by the slides of a magic lantern.

One of our long windows was open; and we could hear the steady smiting of the rain upon the leaves; whilst there came stealing in to us upon the now cooler air that exquisite earthy fragrance—more exquisite still when mingled with the breath of wet roses—which tells of a thirsty and grateful garden-land.

"After all, I don't think we shall have it very bad hereabout, Miss Hebe," Selina Ann remarked cheerfully, when she presently left us for the night. "That rumbling and grumbling seems a long way off now, and dying away like. I expect they've got it mainly out Meadows Norton and Lowbranch way."

"Hebe, aren't you awake! How soundly you sleep, Hebe!"

Startled and confused, I leaped up in bed, and sat there blinking stupidly and owl-like at Felicia Luck; who, clad in white dressing-gown and slippers and wide awake herself, for some reason or other had so appeared at my bedside.

"What is the matter? Are you ill? Is—is the house on fire? Have you seen a ghost—or what?" I stammered, speaking as coherently as I could in my bewilderment.

"Neither—nothing of the kind," Felicia answered rapidly. "But there is a living woman—no ghost—acting in the most extraordinary fashion down in the barons' hall. Truly a remarkable sight. I have just seen her!"

"You have just seen her!" I echoed, still dazed

and blinking in the unwonted lamplight which at this hour brightly illumined my room—Felicia's doing of course.

"Yes—Miss Knowles, you know. And you must come with me and see her too—you may never get such another opportunity," said Felicia in excited tones. "The spectacle is worth seeing, I assure you!—here put on these; anything 'll do; make haste; or it will all be over before we can get back there together."

As yet but imperfectly comprehending Felicia, and certainly not yet realising the thing I was about to do under her guidance, I proceeded mechanically to don the garments she thrust at me; she was *volens volens* upon me; Felicia meanwhile continuing her voluble explanation and hastening my sluggish movements.

She could not get to sleep, she said, try how she would; the growling of the distant thunder, and the pattering of the steady, heavy rain, kept her restless and wakeful—worse than all, glimpses of terrible zinc-blue lightning played constantly around the foot of her bed.

By and by the clocks struck twelve; in due course chimed the quarter after; the half-hour after—this sleeplessness was dreadful, unendurable.

Felicia determined that she would rise; get more light for company's sake, and also from the sitting-room a book that she was reading, at the same time.

No sooner thought of than done! But—hark! What was that!—that muffled roaring sound apparently afar!—which yet seemed to vibrate in the very walls and flooring around her, and to set trembling audibly, in almost earthquake fashion, the long and narrow lattices of the painted windows!

Was the thunder, then, returning; and would the storm, after all, break crashing over the dark forest of Castlegrange!

No. Felicia, recalling in a trice all that I had myself at different times told her respecting the invisible Miss Knowles and her dreadful affliction, understood directly that the dull trembling sound she was listening to was the sound of the organ in the gallery; and that Mr. Tressillian must himself be there, playing to soothe the troubled spirit of Mrs. Vasper's unhappy niece.

A desperate curiosity seized on the soul of Felicia; and she then and there resolved that, happen what might, she would endeavour to see for herself what strange thing was going forward in the barons' hall at the ghostly hour of one o'clock in the morning!

She had often longed to obtain a glimpse of the mysterious and suffering woman who lived apart from and unseen by the rest of the world, shut up with Mrs. Vasper in those far-away upper south rooms of theirs; and lo! here was a sudden opportunity of easing her curiosity that by Felicia's daring spirit, at any rate, was not to be despised!

Noislessly she had slipped on a few clothes, and opened an outer door; and then having ascertained that I was still sleeping soundly, she stole forth cautiously into the corridor on her risky voyage of discovery.

Five minutes afterwards she had rushed back to rouse me. What she herself had seen, whispered Felicia excitedly, I must see likewise. Come—hurry! hurry! there was no time to be lost!

And thus it was that I found myself literally tumbling out of bed, obeying automatically my more resolute companion—more indeed as if I were dreaming than awake, or acting with senses sleep-bound.

A shawl or something snatched haphazard by Felicia from the wardrobe completed my own scrappy toilette; and just as I was wondering where we were, and in what direction we were moving, I realised that we were creeping, groping our way, along the wide dark winding corridor which would presently bring us out into the gallery above the barons' hall.

More than once we traversed a spacious corner landing or lobby lit by a large uncovered window, in at which the wan blue lightning quivered momentarily, like vivid steel gleams shot from a burnished shield.

And all the while as we advanced thus carefully together, we were met by the grand voice of the

organ, labouring, groaning out its awful music, like the deep, troubled roar of the storm-lashed sea when hurled into rocky caverns of perpetual night.

Soon, however, we saw a light ahead—a perpendicular streak; and by this we knew that we were approaching the archway at the corridor end, where hangings of tapestry, falling in massive folds, cut off all view of the gallery beyond.

By degrees my clouded brain had been growing clearer; and I now felt certain that we were acting wrongly. I halted—hung back.

"Felicia, this spying I do not like—it is eaves-dropping, and nothing short of it. It is not right; it is underhand; and I shall go no farther. I—"

But of course she pooh-poohed my scruples, laughed at me, refused to hear me—her stronger will, as usual, dominating mine; and so it ended by our parting breathlessly the hangings of the arched entry, and crouching down there on the Indian matting, like the guilty creatures we were, behind the carved balustrade which bordered the gallery floor.

In places the black oak balusters were completely hidden—perhaps shrouded darkly here with skins of wild beasts, perchance draped more lightly there with once-gorgeous Eastern stuffs, or the dimmed shot-torn standard from some bloody battle plain.

An old Venetian cabinet overshadowed us on the right; a grim mailed knight of the joust, lance in hand, and a sprawling comfortable-looking *fauteuil* which was vaguely supposed to have once been the property either of Cesar Borgia or Catherine de Medici—some said Catherine of Aragon—screened us on the left.

Since in the gallery itself no lights were burning anywhere, the ponderous black balusters immediately in front of us were more than sufficient safeguard just there; through them, or rather between them, we peered downward half-fearfully—at least, I did—into the lighted hall beneath.

The organ was nearly opposite to us, on the other side of the gallery; but though the tall pipes of the instrument were dimly visible, glimmering out from amid the surrounding gloom, we could see nothing either of the player or his blower—they were alike performing in the dark, it would seem.

"That bony woman, Carter, is working at the bellows, depend upon it," Felicia whispered; "for down there—see—sits old Vasper, as hatefully wooden and Sphinx-like as ever."

"Oh, h-a-sh!" I whispered back, in an agony of dread lest discovery, from some unexpected quarter or other, should overtake us in our offence. Were that to happen, indeed, I felt that I should die of shame on the spot!

"Pooh, darling; who can know, who can suspect?" rejoined Felicia comfortably. "How should anybody? Impossible. Acknowledge now," added she, "that we are rewarded for our pains and temerity—amply so, I am sure—that the result justifies the venture!"

"I—I do not know. I wish I was safely back in bed. I wish from my heart that I had never come," I muttered uneasily. "That I do know!"

Felicia laughed softly; then said more soberly: "Do observe her, Hebe—Mrs. Vasper, I mean. From the impassive demeanour of the woman, one might not unreasonably conclude that it was the most natural and agreeable thing in the world for any one to sit there knitting—or whatever it is she's doing—stolidly, at this unearthly hour, whilst yonder unhappy creature, her relative, paces to and fro and round and round like some doomed captive in her cell, moaning and wringing her hands in that horribly desolate manner, with the organ roaring over her head!"

As Felicia was speaking, the figure of Miss Knowles—clad, seemingly, from head to foot in some kind of long clinging robe of woolly-looking gray, and with her bleached thin hair hanging loose and dishevelled about her shoulders, exactly as I could remember having seen it on that Sunday afternoon in the corridor now more than six years gone by—the figure of Miss Knowles, I say, had emerged ghost-like from the shadows below at a remote part of the hall.

So feeble and uncertain were her movements

however, as she came forward into the light, that one, watching her, trembled lest her strength should forsake her utterly and she should drop exhausted, perhaps lifeless, to the cold marble floor.

Onward she tottered in her trailing cinder-coloured robe, and with her thin unbound hair, now looking, I fancied sadly, as if it had been sprinkled with penitential dust and ashes, streaming behind her—truly a pathetic embodiment of dumb and unutterable woe!

We could discern that her figure was wasted and angular as if from long incurable sickness; but somehow the features of the sufferer seemed blurred and hazy—their outline altogether curiously indistinct.

"The fact is, we are too far off or too high up to obtain a good view of her," said Felicia in a tone of regret; "all the same, Hebe, I'd wager anything you please that there is no actual disfigurement, nothing whatever repulsive, in the grief-gray face of that poor forlorn soul down there. Now I wonder why they should say there was, when one could almost declare that there is really nothing of the kind!"

I also, in the days gone by, had wondered the same thing; had pondered the same question; but I said no word about it to Felicia now.

Indeed I scarcely heard what she had said; for I was lost, too absorbed as it were to be alive to other and minor considerations and impressions, in watching the strange wanderings and gestures of Miss Knowles.

"And I wonder what it is," Felicia continued thoughtfully, "that has made her so hopeless and so heartbroken! Something very terrible it must be. To my thinking, it looks very like remorse. But remorse for what, Hebe?"

"Heaven only knows," I sighed then.

"Mr. Tressillian knows—and Mrs. Vasper knows, too, you mean," answered Felicia drily.

"That may be so," I rejoined sadly. "At all events, we do not; and I do not imagine that we ever shall."

"Time will show—*nous verrons*," answered Felicia, as drily as before.

The gray-robed shape in the great hall beneath us—sometimes with its face dropped into its hands; sometimes with its head thrown backward and the hands clenched upon the crown of it—passed and repassed repeatedly the seated figure of Mrs. Vasper.

But that woman of stone never once changed her attitude, never once raised her eyelids. She kept them bent studiously upon the deftly-wielded knitting-needles as they flashed up and down and wriggled with bewildering rapidity in and out of the intricacies of the web-like stitch they were weaving.

The vagaries of Miss Knowles were no novel spectacle to her.

"Ah, listen!" said Felicia abruptly, her black eyes kindling with unfeigned rapture as the sonorous voice of the organ, after a brief rest, burst forth anew in strains now of the divinest harmony—"yes; I thought that was coming! It is Beethoven's fourteenth Sonata! Oh, listen—listen! It is wonderful—it is exquisite—it is unearthly! It goes right into and through one's very heart and brain; it fills them with an aching sort of sorrow which is nevertheless a joy unspeakable—Good gracious, Hebe!" she broke off, alert and matter-of-fact again in the next second, and clutching my arm and shaking it—"do look at Miss Knowles now!"

I did look, eagerly enough; and then desisted, yet not without difficulty—for the lovely, passionate music had flooded my eyes and blinded them with a rush of tears—that Mrs. Vasper's niece had cast herself prone upon the marble floor, and there lay writhing as if in a fit of frenzy or a spasm of mortal anguish that was not to be borne—her finger-nails dug into the roots of her wild hair; her quivering limbs contracted one moment, stretched out and stirring convulsively the next.

It was an abandonment of suffering and despair in extremity, that one, once having beheld, could never, never forget!

Then uplifted and floating above the strong organ music, we heard the thrilling shrieks of agony which issued from the lips of Miss Knowles.



HEBE WAS LOST IN WATCHING THE STRANGE WANDERINGS AND GESTURES OF MISS KNOWLES.

Once or twice before that night, when Felicia and I together crouched there as spies and eavesdroppers behind the gallery balusters, had I listened to these same terrible, lingering cries; but hitherto I had heard them only from afar—it was infinitely more dreadful to be compelled to listen to them anear!

Shivering, I clapped my hands over my ears, and tried thus vainly to shut out the sound.

Then it was that Mrs. Vasper rose calmly from her seat, and went over to the prone gray figure stretched there before her on the floor. She seemed to be speaking to her niece; but what it was that she said, or whether her niece replied in any manner, of course it was impossible for us to tell.

Next Mrs. Vasper stepped into the centre of the hall; looked up towards the organ; and in a clear sharp voice called out—
"Carter!"

Instantly the music, with a kind of prolonged sobbing and whistling noise, ceased—sank brokenly and mournfully away into silence—and soon the tall and bony woman Carter came into view, descending hurriedly the gallery stairs, and saying as she advanced:

"Is Miss Knowles, then, wearied out, exhausted, madam?"

"Judge for yourself—you can see that she is too spent to walk," was the even reply of Mrs. Vasper.

Whereupon the tall nurse stooped low over her charge, and in her long sinewy arms she lifted the moaning, unhappy being whom they called Miss Knowles as easily as if she had been a little sick child.

As Carter bore the sufferer quickly up the broad black stairway and along past the range of stained-glass windows at the gallery end, a tremulous blue flash of the dying lightning glimmered in and just flitted over the unbound hair and pallid face of Miss Knowles.

She gave a convulsive spring in the firm arms of the nurse; and a last long heart-rending shriek

then passed her lips—re-echoing shrilly and wildly throughout the vaulted hall.

"Doreen! Doreen! How long . . . how long? My punishment is greater than I can bear—Doreen!"

My heart seemed to turn cold. I trembled and covered my face with my hands. Nay, I could have wept bitterly; though just at the time, perhaps, I could not have explained why. When I looked around again Miss Knowles was gone.

Once more Mrs. Vasper called upward in the direction of the organ.

"Julian," she said, "shall I extinguish the lights?"

And he answered her briefly from out of the thick shadows which hid him,—
"Yes."

And then we heard him locking the organ and preparing to leave the gallery. A wan rose light was stealing over the stained glass windows now; the "glimmering wind whose feet are fledged with morning" was already "winnowing the deep dense plumes" of the war-clouds massed high in the eastern sky.

"Come, this minute! Let us flee!" Felicia whispered, "or we shall inevitably be found out!"

I needed no second admonition; and in fact hardly drew breath again until we were once more safely shut within our own part of the house. That gained, thankfully enough, Felicia said with a rather forced laugh,—

"Well, Selina Ann was right, was she not? Barometrical changes and atmospheric disturbances certainly do not agree with Miss Knowles."

Then discerning that I myself would make no comment, was in no wise inclined for light talk or frivolous interchange of opinions, she added more seriously,—

"I never in my life witnessed anything so curious—so singularly, so absolutely painful. Did you, Hebe? I wish—oh! how I wish that we knew the meaning, something of the dark meaning of what we have just seen from the gallery!

I would give a great deal, if I possessed it, to know—to fathom the riddle!"

But I had no suggestion to offer on the subject.

I felt that I had erred grievously, or at all events had done an ignoble thing, and was wretched accordingly.

I could only shudder now at the recollection of it all, and wish vainly that all memory of my offence could be blotted out for ever!

"And, Hebe dear," Felicia resumed, with something of real awe in her voice, and coming quite close to me to say it under her breath, "did you—did you hear her scream out in that wild way, 'Doreen—Doreen!'—"

I stopped her then. I could bear no more of it.

"Yes. All the same, it is utterly incomprehensible to me; and—and now do not let us speak of it again—ever again, please, Felicia! I think that my conscience will never really rest until I have confessed fully to Julian how unworthily we have acted to-night."

And in the end—a weary time first—I cried myself to sleep, dreaming then of Julian, Mrs. Vasper and Miss Knowles.

The conscience of Felicia Luck, I am afraid, was considerably less tender than my own.

For shortly after she had returned to her own sleeping-chamber—though it may seem unkind to mention the circumstance—I heard her snoring peacefully in her bed, sleeping the sleep of the just.

(To be continued.)

PREVIOUS to the thirteenth century combs had been used only for adjusting the hair, which explains why gold combs among the ancients, except such as were merely gilt, were unknown, whereas in mediæval times they became very common. Thus, in the place of wood or ivory, combs of pure gold, elaborately set with gems, and having only a single row of teeth, were abundantly displayed.



OWEN TUDOR HAD HELEN'S TWO LITTLE SISTERS IN EITHER HAND.

TWO GIRLS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE girl who opened the door in answer to Owen's knock looked frightened to death when she saw the white, motionless figure resting in his arms.

"Oh, what has happened?" she cried, anxiously.

"I think your sister has only fainted," said Owen. "May I bring her in and help you to restore her?"

"Please. Oh!"—with a terrified look in a pair of wistful brown eyes—"she is not dead?"

"No," cried Owen, kindly; "there is nothing very serious the matter, I think; but her arm is badly bruised, and she has had a shock. She was nearly run over in the fog."

Gladys led the way into the little sitting-room of the flat, it was furnished very simply, but with a taste and freshness which made Owen pretty sure it had been fitted up expressly for the two girls, and that quite recently. When he had lain the still form of his poor little fellow-traveller on the creton-covered sofa he was free to look at the other girl, and decided in his own mind that the two sisters were wonderfully alike. Both had soft brown hair, but the younger's was of a deep nut shade, while her sister's was rich auburn—the auburn loved by artists, which only spiteful people call red. Both had brown eyes, but the stay-at-home sister's were intensely sad, and had an untold wistfulness in their expression, while those of the girl Owen had rescued from perhaps a serious accident were bright and clear, and had an intense resolution in their depths as though she never failed in a purpose she had at heart. Owen could fancy her the presiding spirit, cheering and encouraging her more timid sister. And then he was recalled from his reverie by the latter's producing some smelling-salts and holding them to the patient's nostrils.

"You should give her a little brandy," he

suggested; "my mother often faints, and we find that the best remedy."

Gladys flushed painfully.

"I am afraid we have none. I will see if the housekeeper could lend me some."

"Better let me go and get it," said Owen, kindly; "you will not like to leave your sister till she is better."

He sped away, making nothing of the weary stairs in his kindness of heart, and Gladys bent over May Nairn in an agony of grief. Owen had supposed them sisters, and sisters they had become in love and sympathy, for May had taken an intense liking for Gladys on their first meeting, and had persuaded her to come and share her tiny home, to cast in her lot with hers.

"I am alone in the world, and so are you; I am earning my own living, you want to earn yours; why shouldn't we live together? You look much too gentle to battle through life alone, and Mrs. Brandon will tell you I am enormously strong."

Mrs. Brandon looked at her late pupil affectionately, and then said to Gladys,—

"May is terribly alone, and I believe you would both be ever so much happier together; why shouldn't you try it, at any rate for a time?"

So Gladys Keith was received as an inmate of May's little home, and the two girls whom fate had so strangely brought together exchanged confidences.

"I want to work as hard as I can, and deny myself any needless pleasure until I have paid that man," said May, passionately. "When I have given Mr. Page back every penny I have ever cost him I shall be content."

"It was a cruel stipulation," admitted Gladys; "I wonder how your mother could have consented to it."

"Don't let's talk of her," said May, sadly. "I always feel as if I could never forgive her, Gladys. What strange histories we have! I am the child of a very rich woman; you were meant to be a very rich woman yourself, only fate prevented.

Yet here we are, thrown on our own resources, and alone in London."

"If I can only hide myself," breathed Gladys. "I can't explain it to you, May; but I feel as if I cared for nothing so long as I did not meet anyone who knew me—before last August."

"The Brandons are as true as steel," said May, thoughtfully; "and I mean to tell everyone else you are my sister."

"But—it isn't true."

"It is in a sense. All women are sisters and we as fellow-workers—are doubly so. Besides, don't you see, Gladys, it will hide you better than any other place? If Mr. Vesey tries to find you he will inquire for a girl living alone; he will never think of being curious about two sisters."

"And what do you think I can do," asked poor Gladys, when she had yielded her first point, "what do you do, May?"

"A little of everything," replied Miss Nairn, "but my strong points are colour and figures. I've found two or three very flourishing dress-makers who haven't an idea of arithmetic, and distrust all their assistants. I keep their books, and I hope some day my taste in colours will lead to something; meanwhile, I copy deeds for lawyers when I'm slack, I give a few music lessons, I mend old lace, in fact I'm quite a proficient at that. I work very hard, I'm so tired that sometimes I quite long for bed time, but I never forget the duty I've got before me, and I keep on, and last quarter I earned fifty pounds."

"Fifty pounds," not so very long ago Gladys had been allowed a larger sum for her pocket money, but now, as the result of a girl's own earnings, it seemed to her enormous.

Miss Nairn was as good as her word; she found Gladys a few stray odd jobs from the number offered to herself, for as she said cheerfully the day had only twenty-four hours, and she could but keep all on, so she made over to Gladys such things as she could not undertake herself, and when the younger girl was able to pay ten shillings a week, all Miss Nairn would accept as

her contribution to housekeeping, she felt as if her fortune were being made.

Just before May's meeting with Owen Tudor a piece of good luck had befallen each of the partners. May's eye for colour had proved valuable at last and she had been engaged by the head of an art furnishing establishment as general adviser on home decorations, at the handsome salary of two hundred a year, and Gladys had obtained the post of assistant to an old conjuror at ten shillings a week.

May thought herself fortunate; her services being only required from eleven till five, she had still ample leisure for a few odd jobs and hoped by them to gain at least another fifty pounds. She had been dismissed early from the Emporium that day, as the Proprietor declared no one would venture out in such a fog, and she had been hastening home to Gladys when the fates threw her in the way of Mr. Tudor.

Owen returned with the brandy far sooner than Gladys had dared to expect; together they administered some to the patient, and in a few moments, with a strange little gasping sob she opened her eyes, casting them wonderingly on the stranger.

"You fainted, and this gentleman brought you home, dear," explained Gladys.

"I hope you are better now, Miss Nairn," said Owen kindly, "will you not let me go for a doctor?"

"I am quite well now," she answered, trying to smile, "thanks to you that is; I can't think how I was so stupid as to faint, but my arm was so painful."

"I was so frightened," confessed Gladys. "I never expected you till five."

"I've got a half holiday," said May cheerfully, "and I thought we should be so cosy."

Owen was on the point of taking leave, but May Nairn turned to him in her pretty, earnest way.

"I know I have given you a great deal of trouble, but I am very, very much obliged to you; but for you I might be lying senseless in the accident ward of some hospital, and never have come home to Gladys at all."

The younger girl's eyes filled with tears. Owen could see them glittering on her long dark lashes.

"Indeed I did very little," replied Mr. Tudor, "and was only too pleased to be of any use. Will you allow me to call to-morrow to inquire after you?"

"Indeed it will not be necessary; I hope to be at work again to-morrow."

"You must not run any risks; surely your pupils can have another holiday."

"Pupils might, but I have to do with customers, who are a much more important species," then, seeing the utter bewilderment on Owen's face, "I am an assistant at Dewe's and Clare's Emporium. I don't stand behind the counter and serve people, though I should not refuse to do that if it were necessary. I am supposed to advise people what furniture to buy, and how to manage their drawing-rooms. I think if ever I had a drawing-room I would never let another woman decree what it was to be like."

"It must be an interesting employment," said Owen, pleasantly; "then I may call to-morrow to inquire after you?"

He was gone before May could manage another denial.

Gladys closed the outer door on him and, returning to the little sitting-room, was surprised to see her friend looking sadder than she had ever seen her.

"Is the pain so bad, dear?"

"It's pretty bad; my arm feels on fire. But it's not the pain that makes me cry, Gladys."

"What is it, dear?"

"I think it's—everything. I mean," trying to make herself clearer, "generally I pretend I don't mind what I do so that I get the money to pay my step-father. I make believe it's fun to be a shop girl—that's what spiteful people would call me—and a kind of female Jack-of-all-Trades; but really, Gladys, I feel sore about it. My mother was a baronet's daughter, and I suppose my foolish pride comes from her. That man who brought me home was a gentleman, Gladys."

"A perfect gentleman," agreed Gladys.

"And I am not a lady, I mean I shouldn't rank as one. If things had been different with us, Gladys, we should have met men like that just as equals—we should have belonged to the same world."

Gladys shuddered.

"I never want to meet anyone," she said, simply; "I should be quite content never to go anywhere or see anyone."

"You think so now," said May, quietly, "because you've had a lot of trouble, but you'll change your mind yet. I should love to be in society, to meet all kinds of people, and be treated as their equal, and I should like to marry some one enormously rich and grand, and then I'd take care to go somewhere where I could meet the Pages; and if Mr. Page, attracted by my husband's rank, tried to scrape acquaintance with us, I would scorn him—I would refuse all his advances and treat him as he has treated me."

"But you wouldn't marry just to do that; you wouldn't tie yourself to anyone you hated all your life, just to be avenged on Mr. Page?"

"I don't know," she sighed. "Well, I shall never marry anyone—firstly, I mustn't dream of romance till I have paid my step-father; secondly, I don't know a single man, except the shop assistant, whom I think beneath me, and a few customers, who doubtless think me beneath them."

"And my Professor!" put in Gladys, smiling.

"Yes, your Professor. If I were a rich woman, Gladys, I would give heaps of juvenile parties and engage your Professor for every one of them till he got quite rich."

"He wouldn't be my Professor if he were rich," said Gladys dreamily. "I couldn't fancy the dear old man in anything but that shining suit of black and that antiquated beaver hat, which he takes off with such an air. We are going to Camberwell to-night, May, to a birthday party."

Poor little Gladys, only three months before the heiress of Diamond End, and now thankful to earn ten shillings a week as the assistant of a third rate conjuror.

Gladys had reclaimed her trunks at Charing Cross and now found her ample wardrobe a very great advantage to her, since suburban journeys by night in trains and omnibuses, with long walks at the end in all sorts of weather, were not beneficial to clothes; she was thankful too that she had brought her evening dresses away with her, true, they were coloured, but she would not forget her uncle and aunt the sooner because she was not always gowned in black and only feared she was rather too grand for the Professor's shiny evening suit of the cut of fifteen years ago.

But the customers liked the elaborate toilet and took it as a compliment to themselves.

To-night Gladys had on a pale-blue cashmere, trimmed with white lace, the elbow sleeves and square-cut bodice were finished off with a soft white feathery frilling, and Gladys looked her very best.

"I hate having to go and leave you," she said to May as she buttoned her dark cloak about her preparatory to meeting the Professor at Snow Hill Station.

"Never mind, I'll be lazy and go to bed early. Gladys, when you are out with the Professor, do you ever imagine you are one of the guests; I am sure I should."

Gladys shook her head.

"If I were a guest I wouldn't treat anyone as they treat me. I think, May, most people imagine the professor and I are—something like street-organ players; once we were invited to have some supper in the kitchen."

"Gladys!"

"Well, you know," said Gladys, with an odd little smile, "we were both hungry, so we didn't gratify our pride by refusing, and the servants treated us as if we had been a king and queen; we gave them a little performance afterwards in the kitchen. There was a very fat cook, and I really thought she would have laughed herself no fits."

Professor Chester looked seventy; he was an old man with silvery hair, blue eyes, and the very kindest face you could picture.

He was certainly a clever conjuror, but he had never contrived to "get on," he always employed an "assistant," who played the piano during the intervals of his tricks, took the confederate's part—when such a person was necessary—and other ways contributed to the success of his efforts.

"Whereabouts is it?" asked Gladys, as they got out at Denmark Hill station to find the fog somewhat clearer, but the evening decidedly raw and unpleasant.

"In the Grove, nice people, I have been there before."

And Gladys felt herself inclined to endorse his verdict, when, instead of being expected to take off her wraps in the hall, she was shown into a comfortable bed-room, where a fire burnt brightly and a neat maid enquired civilly if she would take a cup of tea.

Downstairs things were equally pleasant; Mrs. Duncan, the hostess, shook hands with Gladys and the Professor just as though they had been invited guests, and then led the way to the room where a kind of raised stage had been prepared for their entertainment, facing which, on long benches, were seated about sixty children and a fair sprinkling of grown-up people, and then a wonderful surprise awaited Gladys.

In the second row, between two pretty girls in white dresses, she recognised May's hero, the man who had proved such a friend in need; she felt herself grow crimson with surprise, and then as she turned half mechanically to assist the Professor, she could not help wondering if May's knight would speak to her—if he would connect her with the scene of the morning.

There was an interval of a quarter of an hour between the two parts of the entertainment; someone carried off the Professor to smoke a cigarette, an unwonted attention, lemonade and negus were handed round among the children; and more varied refreshments appeared for the adult guests; Gladys had just begun to feel lonely and out of it when a pretty white-robed girl mounted the steps to the little platform and addressed her,—

"Mother wants you to come and see the conservatory, we shall just have time, but you must have a glass of wine first."

The conservatory was nothing compared to the magnificent array of glass at Diamond End, but judged from a suburban standpoint it was charming, and Gladys appreciated the kindness even more.

Helen Duncan was a pretty, graceful girl who treated the young pianiste as an equal.

"I am afraid you had a bad journey," she said frankly, "my cousin says the fog was dreadful in London."

"It is not so bad as it was this morning," and then as they left the conservatory they came face to face with Owen Tudor, who had Helen's two little sisters in either hand.

"Oh, Mr. Tudor," began the girl, and then she stopped amazed at the look of recognition he bestowed on her companion.

"I have met Miss Nairn before to-day," said Owen simply, quite unconscious that the deadly whiteness of Gladys's face was caused by the sound of his own name. "I trust your sister is better as you are able to leave her."

"She is much better, thank you," then, as he passed on, Gladys gave Miss Duncan a brief sketch of the morning's event, feeling after her kindness some explanation was due.

"And you and your sister live all alone in a flat? how perfectly delightful. Miss Nairn, I should so like to come and see you."

Gladys blushed crimson.

"We never have any callers," she said, "we live too high up, and, Mrs. Duncan would not like it."

"If mother brings me will you promise not to turn us out," asked Helen.

Gladys smiled.

"It is so unlikely that I think I may safely promise."

"Is your sister a pianiste like you?"

"Oh no, May is an assistant at Dewe's and Clare's, she sees people who want to be told what to buy; they call her the head of their home decoration department; she always seems to be planning drawing-rooms."

"Is she older than you."
 "Very little," said Gladys, and then with a graceful smile, she rejoined the Professor.
 "Mr. Tudor," said Helen Duncan to Owen, with whom, since his sister Arline was her bosom friend, she felt tolerably intimate, "I think that girl is simply splendid."

Owen smiled.
 "As a conjuror, Miss Duncan."
 "As a—as a girl," answered Helen, indignantly, "anyone can see she is a lady to her finger tips, and yet she doesn't give herself airs in the least. I mean to make mother take me to see the Nairns. Why not," as Owen silently shook his head, "I am sure they are ladies."

"Perfect ladies," answered Owen simply, "but poor and proud, just the sort of people it would be misery to, if they thought they were being patronized."

"Isn't it a respectable part? I am sure 'Tregarthan Mansions' sounds much grander than 400, Camberwell Grove."

"Quite respectable, but—I can't put it plainer, Miss Duncan—I only saw the Nairns for a few minutes, but they struck me as being painfully proud and sensitive."

"Is the elder sister as pretty as this one?"

"Far prettier," replied Owen, a remark which set Helen thinking it was just as well Mr. Tudor was removing shortly to his country seat.

It might be all very well for her to call on the Nairns as an affable act of kindly condescension, but it would not do at all for the Master of Diamond End to take too much interest in young persons who earned their living in such a very peculiar fashion.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERHAPS the member of the little family who seemed the least elated on the eventful day when they were to take possession of Diamond End was Owen Tudor himself.

He was glad to be free from all pecuniary cares, and thankful to be able to give his mother and the girls a happy and luxurious home, but there were two things which well nigh counterbalanced these feelings and made the young man look, Mrs. Montague declared, as grave as though he had been going to a funeral, and these two things were, first an innate sense of justice, which made him feel it almost wrong to take possession of his great uncle's home, while Richard Tudor's adopted daughter was perhaps starving in some London Court; the other an uneasy sensation that the proof of his Uncle Henry's death was not so conclusive as he could have preferred.

On this point Mr. Vesey agreed, only, as the lawyer said, Mrs. Montague had spoken openly of her brother-in-law's death to her children, long before there was a question of Owen gaining anything by it. It had been a fact known to Owen from early boyhood that his Uncle Henry had died in great poverty abroad, and therefore the loss of the letter announcing his death, and Mrs. Montague's complete forgetfulness of where that event took place, did not seem to affect the question.

"Of course, if such a wonderful thing happened as Henry Tudor's returning to England and proving his identity, you would have to give up the estate to him, but even then your half share of the personal property would be worth having, and nothing having been heard of your uncle all these years you would easily gain a quitance for all back rents. I honestly advise you to take possession of Diamond End, and I believe that it will be yours and your children's after you."

Doris bade the travellers a very cheerful goodbye.

She was to board in a private family near the High School, and said she should count the days till the Christmas holidays, when she should come and see Owen in his glory; Ethel and Arline were greatly excited, while Mrs. Montague was divided between delight at leaving Camberwell, and indignation that her son intended to keep on the Squire's old housekeeper, and had made no offer to allow his mother an income, acting upon the

hint received from Doris that money was not safe in her hands.

It was a lovely day when they finally turned their back on the little house at Camberwell; one of those bright autumn days which do come sometimes in the most abused month of all the year, and which some people call St. Martin's summer. Mrs. Montague gave a sigh of relief as the cab turned out of the narrow street.

"There," she said affectedly, "thank goodness, we've done with back stairs. We are county people now, and can forget all these years of misery."

"We have been very happy in Camberwell, mother," said Ethel, a little wistfully, as she thought of the girl friends she was leaving for ever, "and I don't think we lived in a back slum."

Mrs. Montague drew herself up proudly.

"You children don't understand things," she said, shortly. "Remember, I forbid you to speak of our poverty to anyone you meet in our new home, and I won't have you talking about Doris being a teacher in the High School. It would do us harm."

Ethel looked anxiously at her brother.

"Don't lay so many charges on the girls, mother, Mr. Vesey knows most of the North-shire magnates, and as he is quite aware I was only a clerk at a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and under notice to lose that, people will guess pretty well we have been poor. There's no shame in it."

"Oh, of course I am nobody," said Mrs. Montague, pettishly. "My feelings and wishes go for nothing; but I'd have you remember, Owen, if your father had lived the property would have been his and mine, not yours at all."

Owen smiled, he really could not help it. It was such a strange speech to make before the girls, who were not his father's children, but Mrs. Montague was a passionate, imperious woman, and never stopped to reason when she was in a temper.

"Will there be a triumphal arch?" asked Ethel, when they were safely in the train, "and will all your tenants turn out to welcome us like they do in story books?"

Owen shook his head.

"I don't think triumphal arches are ever attempted in November, and you know, girls, to the people here I must seem like a usurper."

Mrs. Montague turned on him sharply.

"That's nonsense, Owen, the place is yours, and people will have to put up with you."

One of the girls—Arline—slipped her hand into Owen's; she felt instinctively that her mother's words jarred on him. Somehow Mrs. Montague was like a blister to her family when she was out of humour.

The train stopped at Chilton just as the short day was closing in. The melancholy-looking platform was utterly deserted, except by one shock-headed, red-haired porter, who filled in his own person the other functions of booking-clerk and ticket collector. Owen handed out his mother and sister, thankful that the gas was lighted, and so they could at least see their way to the waiting room.

"I'll see to the luggage," he said, pleasantly, "if you sit down by the fire."

The porter came to his assistance. The boxes were got out of the van before the train went off again. Owen was glad they had only their personal belongings with them, for he began to think they might have to depend upon a hired fly, supposing it were possible to procure such a thing in this country wilderness.

"Is there any carriage here from Diamond End?" he asked the porter.

"No sir."

"It is very odd. I wrote to the butler and requested him to send to meet this train," said Owen, who was keeping on several of his great uncle's servants for the present.

"There's been a mistake, sir," said the porter good-temperedly. "Mr. Hawkins were down this morning and told me the new master was coming to-morrow. He named this very train, now I come to think of it. It's only a matter of two miles to the house, sir. There isn't another

train in for three hours, I could go up and tell them if you liked."

But, finding there was a very "decent" fly to be hired at the Blue Lion, Owen would by no means consent to this, and the obliging porter having stepped across to that hostelry to give the order, Owen went into the waiting-room to explain the mistake to the ladies.

"I put to-morrow in my letter, and Hawkins seems to have understood it literally to mean to-day's to-morrow."

"Very impertinent," said Mrs. Montague.

"Oh come, mother, it's only an accident; I dare say the old man will be terribly put out about it when he finds out his mistake."

"I shall take care to let him know my opinion of his negligence," said the widow haughtily.

"Mother, dear," said Owen, coaxingly, "don't be angry with anyone to-night. We have borne a good many hardships together, and, now brighter times seem to be coming, I want you to be happy in them; let us all four make a resolution to see things through rose-coloured glasses just for to-night."

Mrs. Montague was softened.

"You are so like your father, Owen," she said gently; "he always looked on the bright side of things. Well, we will all try and make the best of everything even if we find no beds aired and nothing to eat."

"It won't be as bad as that," said Arline cheerfully; "well, here comes the fly, now mother we shall soon be there."

The Blue Lion fly deserved the porter's praise; it took them to Diamond End in style, and on seeing them, the woman at the lodge must surely have sent one of her children running up to the house by the footpath with the tidings, for when the fly stopped at the grand entrance, the butler was on the steps, and his wife loomed in the distance, just inside the hall.

"I'd not have had it happen for worlds, sir," said poor Hawkins; "we'd been planning all day to receive you properly to-morrow, of course, I see now it's to-day you meant."

"Never mind," said Owen cheerfully, "so long as you've got a fire for my mother, and a cup of tea, we shall not complain."

He led Mrs. Montague into the grand old house, proud of his still beautiful mother. The two girls followed, feeling a little sadly they were intruders, since they had no part or parcel in the Tudor family; but kind Mrs. Hawkins welcomed them in her own hospitable fashion, saying it did her heart good to see a young lady about the place again.

"And your rooms are all ready, ma'am," she said to Mrs. Montague, "I've had fires in them all day long."

She led the way down the long polished oaken hall to the beautiful carved staircase, whose carpet was so thick and soft that no footfall sounded on it. Mrs. Montague looked approvingly at the rooms prepared for her, and sat down in a low chair by the fire.

"I will send up your luggage directly, ma'am," said Mrs. Hawkins; "can I be of any help to you if your maid has not arrived?"

"Thank you," said Mrs. Montague, "but I shall not dress to-night, and so can manage without her."

The daughters were half amused and half ashamed at this ingenious reply; never within their memory had their mother boasted a maid or dressed for the evening. They followed Mrs. Hawkins down a long corridor to a pretty room, furnished in pink and white, there were two little brass bedsteads, in fact everything was in duplicate, and Ethel felt thankful to think this could not have been the abode of the lost Gladys.

"No," said Mrs. Hawkins, as though in answer to the thought in her mind, "this room was not my young lady's, missie, it was fitted up by my mistress for a guest-chamber; she'd but just finished the planning of it when she was taken, poor lady."

Arline put one hand timidly on the old housekeeper's arm—

"I know how hard it must be for you to see strangers here, and we two, you know, haven't a

bit of right to be here, we are not Tudors at all, only Owen is our brother."

"Bless your heart, missie," said the good woman from her tears, "I'm pleased to welcome you; the old place has seemed forlorn and deserted since Miss Gladys went away. I loved her dearly, so did every servant in this house, but if it comes to the rights of it, missie, your brother has more claim to it than she had; he carries his pedigree in his face. I'm thinking you could tell him anywhere for a Tudor, and Miss Gladys, poor dear, hadn't a drop of their blood in her veins. And now I'll leave you young ladies, for I must go and see what sort of a meal can be sent up; it'll not be the sort of dinner I'd like to have given your brother the first night in his own house, for you see I'm taken by surprise."

Left alone, the two girls looked at each other. "It's very beautiful," said Ethel, dreamily; "but somehow to me it will always seem haunted."

"Why—because of the terribly sudden way in which Mr. and Mrs. Tudor died?"

"No. I think, if they loved each other, there was something beautiful in their going together, and neither being left to mourn. I was thinking of our cousin, Gladys."

"She isn't our cousin," corrected Arline; "she isn't even any relation to Owen; but, Ethel, I seem to pity her more since I have been here. I can understand it must have been terrible to leave a home like this."

The impromptu dinner was served in the library, and did great credit to Mrs. Hawkins' skill, since, though she apologised for its deficiencies, it was a very tasty repast, and far superior (if she had known) to any meal Owen had ever partaken of at his own table before. The butler and footman waited with due formality, and Arline tried to feel it real and not a dream, from which she would wake presently to find herself in the tiny kitchen of their little house in Camberwell, trying to instruct their very small domestic in culinary lore.

"If only Doris were here," breathed Ethel, when they had gone to the drawing-room, and the beautiful piano seemed somehow to remind her of her elder sister.

"If Doris had a spark of right feeling she would be here," said her mother, crossly. "What business has she to disgrace us by persisting in marrying Ashley Croft now?"

"Ashley Croft is a gentleman," said Arline, indignantly; "and he loved Doris when she was poor."

"She is poor now," said Mrs. Montague, tartly. "We are all poor except Owen, and as things are, he can't raise money on the property or alienate any of it by making settlements on us. The only thing for you girls to do is to marry well."

The sisters sighed. Both were heart-whole and fancy-free; but neither were ambitious. If their mother took it into her head it was their duty to marry well, she might make their life at Diamond End very far from being a Paradise.

"I am not in any hurry," said Arline, cheerfully. "I mean to enjoy myself first. Mother, dear, don't you think this house perfectly delightful?"

"It's well enough, but it's a terrible way from a town. We shall be dreadfully lonely here unless the neighbours are nice."

"I suppose they will come and call?"

"Not till after Sunday; after we have appeared in church, they will conclude we are ready to see them."

"Oh!" And Arline looked as if she wished they had chosen any other day than Tuesday for their arrival.

But one person did not wait till the family had appeared at church. Only the second day after their arrival Maurice Douglas walked up the avenue and requested to see Mrs. Montague.

No man ever acted more prudently than Gladys Keith's false lover. Professionally he could not afford to be at daggers drawn with the richest family in the neighbourhood. He was quite aware that the Blakes (and, perhaps, other people) would enlighten the new owner of Diamond End as to his merits, and so he thought it best to try and ingratiate himself with the

new-comers before they had been warned against him, and he had besides a private reason of his own.

It chanced that the girls and Owen had gone for a drive, and Mrs. Montague had the caller to herself, and Maurice Douglas used his handsome face and winning manner to such purpose that the widow was completely fascinated, and sang his praises loudly to her children on their return.

"Such a delightful man!" she said, eagerly; "quite an acquisition to any neighbourhood. I am sure you and Mr. Douglas will be great friends, Owen; he is perfectly charming."

The old butler was arranging the afternoon tea on a little table in front of Ethel, and she could not help seeing that his face grew as black as a thundercloud as Mrs. Montague pronounced this encomium, and she at once guessed that Maurice Douglas was not the paragon her mother thought.

"Hawkins," she said to the old servant that evening when she saw him alone in the hall, "you don't seem to like Mr. Douglas. Isn't he a clever doctor?"

"I've nought to say against him as a doctor, Missie; but if you ask me what I think of him as a man, I'll tell you. He's the greatest coward and the biggest scoundrel that ever went unhung."

(To be continued.)

THE SQUIRE'S SON.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE two men were almost silent during their journey to the Warren.

Sir Charles, seemingly fearful of losing sight of the old lawyer, sent his horse on by the groom and availed himself of a seat in Mr. Reeves's brougham.

Rebecca stood awaiting them in the grand old drawing-room. She shook the old lawyer's hand with a grateful emphasis.

"I knew you would not desert me," she said, in a low voice.

And after the three had toyed listlessly with lunch, they went into Rebecca's quiet little study, and there she repeated the story which had so horrified Sir Charles.

Mr. Reeves proved a very different listener, however.

During the whole recital he made no sign, uttered no single word. But at every important point he jotted down a memorandum upon his slip of paper, as he had prepared to do in his own room; and when Rebecca had finished he slowly and calmly mused over what he had written.

He mused for some minutes, then he looked up, and with a painful mixture of sadness and sternness in his tone said,—

"You are right; there is at least the suspicion of foul play."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Rebecca, turning pale and clasping her hands. "I knew it all through, yet you cannot imagine how painful the words sound coming from you who are not likely to be deceived."

The old lawyer shook his head.

"I am an old man," he said, "and not far from the grave; Sir Charles, Miss Goodman, at this moment I fervently wish I had already reached it. It is a hard fate for me, having served the Dale for a lifetime loyally and faithfully, to be compelled to bring disgrace within its threshold."

"Nay!" said Rebecca, warmly. "You serve it still! Remember that for all we know poor Hugh is still alive: which is better, to leave him wronged and injured, or restore him, though in so doing you bring one of his race to justice?"

Mr. Reeves asked,—

"Have you any reason for supposing Hugh to be still alive?"

"N-o," she said, "excepting the slight one these anonymous notes may give."

He bent his brows and examined the documents carefully.

"You cannot trace any likeness in the handwriting to Hugh Darrell's."

"Nor to any one else's," she said. "I have spent hours in attempting to find some familiar letter or word, but without success. Sometimes I have fancied, but fancied only, that they might have been written by Grace."

The lawyer looked up and shook his head.

"Not," he said, "if you are right in saying that she believed Hugh Darrell to be dead."

"She did, most decidedly," said Rebecca, "often she has spoken of him as poor uncle's 'dead Hugh.' Besides, these were posted in London; if Grace were there she would soon be here. She knew that I loved her, and she would know that the Squire is dead. There is nothing to keep her from me—nothing, for she knew that Reginald Dartmouth tried to snare her for her wealth and would know that now, seeing he had got all he wanted, he would leave her unmolested."

"You think he did not love her?" asked Mr. Reeves.

"Impossible!" was the instantaneous reply. "Reginald Dartmouth could not love."

Mr. Reeves thought for a moment or two, then he said,—

"I agree with you that the advice which this anonymous note gives is the best under the circumstances. In the well, in my opinion, lies the clue to the mystery."

"Ah," said Sir Charles, "the well, that's it. We must get at that."

"But how?" asked Mr. Reeves, with a deep sigh. "We cannot take possession of it with spade and picks; the steward or the gardener would prevent us. An action for trespass would lie."

"Can it not be done at night—secretly?" asked Sir Charles. "I and a strong man could dig it out before the morning."

The lawyer shook his head.

"No," he said, "that would not do. They would see the lights from the lodge or hear the click of the spades. Before you had been at work five minutes we should be discovered. No, that will not do. Yet we must get at it by some means. Let me think."

And he put his hand to his forehead.

The other two sat quite silent, they knew how keen was the brain of the old man, and were patient.

Presently he looked up.

"I have it," he said, and they noticed that the sad expression of his face had given way to a keen, acute look that showed he was interested in the pursuit and had become reconciled to it. "I have it. You are still believed to be Reginald Dartmouth's friend—say, do not shrink; cunning must be met by cunning. You cannot but be sensible that you are dealing with a rogue and not a gentleman, Sir Charles! I say you are still believed to be his friend. If I remember rightly you had the planning out of the racecourse; it was a pity you did it so admirably, for your own sake," and he glanced at the new healed arm then continued: "The steward and the gardener are fully aware of that."

"The gardener is quite manageable," said Sir Charles.

"Just so," resumed the lawyer. "Your plan must be this. This afternoon—or no time must be lost—you must walk round and see the steward. Tell him that you have been requested by Reginald Dartmouth to see that a few alterations are made in the shrubberies. Take him with you to the well, and while looking round decide—as if on the spur of the moment—that you will have that dug out and ask how soon that can be done."

"He will say a week or two," said Sir Charles, shaking his head.

"Without doubt," said Mr. Reeves, curtly, "but you will of course be impatient; declare that you would like it commenced at once and, if need be, throw off your coat and, as if in jest, say that you will take a turn at it yourself."

"I see, I see!" exclaimed Sir Charles.

Mr. Reeves, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, went on without noticing the interruption.

"You will find the men ready enough then;

few workmen can resist the temptation of working side by side with a baronet."

"Then for once my title will be of some service!" sighed Sir Charles.

Mr. Reeves nodded—he was still thinking.

"That is not all. I must be on the spot, there must be no lack of witnesses when whatever is to be found there comes to light."

"Ay," said Sir Charles—"how will that be managed?"

"Leave it to me," replied Mr. Reeves. "We must not fail. Once make a false slip and Reginald Dartmouth will get an inkling. Should he do so I would give little for our chance of success. He is a rogue—if this evidence is trustworthy—but he is a clever one."

"I will go," said Sir Charles, "and do my part at once."

"And I," said Rebecca "what can I do?—nothing but wait in devouring suspense. Oh, how much I have suffered these last few years."

Sir Charles bent his golden head over her downcast face.

"Recomforted, Rebecca," he murmured. "We are nearing the crisis now, at least."

She looked up with a sigh and a sad smile.

"Yes," she said, "but how much nearer are we to finding poor Hugh?"

"Nearer than you may think, madam," said Mr. Reeves, looking up suddenly from his slip of paper. "I am not given to presentiments usually, but something tells me that he is not far off."

And there was the slightest tremor in the hard, dry voice as its owner rose and left the room in search of Mrs. Lucas, of whom he wished to ask a few questions.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SIR CHARLES, eager to be at work, started for the new Hall within five minutes.

Thompson, the gardener, seeing him approach, came towards the gate to meet him.

Poor Sir Charles felt very uncomfortable, but he nerved himself to the unpleasant task by recalling Mr. Reeves' distinction between a gentleman and a rogue, and, with a cheery return of the gardener's salutation, passed into the grounds of Dale.

"How are the flowers?" he asked.

"All right, sir, thank you. Can I have the honour of making you up a few?"

"No, thanks," said Sir Charles, avoiding his eye. "The fact is, Thompson, I have just strolled down—I am staying at the inn—to execute a little commission for Captain Dartmouth."

"Yes, sir."

"Yes," continued Sir Charles. "By the way have you heard from your master during the last few days?"

"No, sir; I seldom do; neither has the steward; he was only remarking this morning that he hadn't received any direct orders from Mr. Stanfield."

"Mr. Stanfield?" echoed Sir Charles, forgetting the name for the moment.

"Yes sir, the secretary. He always writes—never Captain Dartmouth. It be very different to the old times, so the people say. Squire Harry used to have everything under his own eye."

"Ay," said Sir Charles, who seemed relieved by the intelligence that the steward had not heard from Reginald Dartmouth. "Well, there are a few alterations to be made, Thompson, and I am going to see them done."

"Oh, indeed, sir," said Mr. Thompson, who looked quite pleased. "Anything I can do, sir, I shall only be too happy. What is it, sir? about the grounds?"

"Y-e-s," said Sir Charles, "somewhere about the shrubberies; they are to be extended."

"Oh, I always wanted the captain to plant more shrubs," said Thompson. "Only last time he spoke to me I ventured to suggest that there was a deal of wasted ground at the side of the house."

"Which side?" asked Sir Charles, quickly.

"I'll show you, sir, if you don't mind the trouble of stepping round."

Sir Charles said he should be glad to do so, and Thompson, turning down his sleeves and slipping on his coat as a slight acknowledgment of the honour done him, led the way.

Presently he stopped, and, pointing his finger to the space round the well, said,—

"That's the place, Sir Charles; that's the eyesore to the grounds. We tried all sorts of dodges to hide it, but it's all of no use. Roses won't do there, nor climbers. What it wants is a thorough turning over and planting."

"Just so," said Sir Charles, delighted with the way in which the man was playing into his hands, and forgetting that fortune is fickle and must change with all things. "Just so; that is the very place I want seen to. Planting you say would be best; but you would still have that well there to disfigure it."

"Yes," said Thompson, staring at it thoughtfully. "Captain Dartmouth had it half filled up and the bricks knocked about to make it look like a ruin; but I said when it was being done it would look more like an ugly dustbin, and so it does."

"Yes; it is ugly," said Sir Charles. "I think it would be a good plan to level it, eh? What do you say?"

Thompson nodded approvingly.

"Very good plan indeed, sir."

"Get the rubbish out and level it over," said Sir Charles.

"Well, there will be no occasion to empty it—"

"Oh, don't you think so?" interrupted the other, with well-assumed indifference, and stepping up to the important spot with a careless gait. "Don't you think so? I think it would be better. By Jove, it would be good fun to lend a hand. Really I have a whim to try a little spade and shovelwork!" and he laughed cheerily, and as Thompson, as in duty bound, laughed too, he went on,—

"I used to be able to ply a pick and spade as well as most boys in my youth. I wonder whether I've lost the knack!"

"Thompson," he continued, with a sudden laugh, "I tell you what we will do: You get one of your strongest men to bring some tools, and then we will empty this old dustbin between us."

The gardener was delighted, as Mr. Reeves had prophesied. What a fine thing it would be to be able to say in a careless, off-hand way over a glass of ale at the Darrell Arms that he had "just been digging up the old well with Sir Charles Anderson."

Before he could reply, however, a man came round the corner and gave Sir Charles a respectful "Good-day."

It was the steward; and Sir Charles's luck was on the turn.

"Good-morning," said Thompson. "I'm glad you've come. Sir Charles is thinking of digging the rubbish out of this old well and levelling it. Captain Dartmouth wants shrubs here."

"Indeed!" said the steward, with a look of surprise. "Why, it is not long since the captain had it filled up."

Sir Charles's heart beat fast.

Was he to be balked at the last moment?

"How long ago was that? A long time I think."

"Yes, it is some time," said the steward. "Perhaps Captain Dartmouth has changed his mind. It's very strange, though, for he was so particular to have the well filled. He came down himself and saw the men started to work."

This, as may be imagined, made Sir Charles all the more anxious to gain his end.

"He has changed his mind, no doubt," he replied.

"When did you see Captain Dartmouth, Sir Charles?" asked the steward, respectfully and with nothing save curiosity in his tone.

"A few days since," replied the baronet, which was perfectly true. He had seen Reginald in the park though he had not spoken to him.

"Well, we must do as the captain orders, of course," said the steward. "Can I render you any assistance, Sir Charles? I will send two or three men down if you will say when you would like it done."

"Oh, no; there is no occasion," replied Sir Charles, hastily. "Thompson and I are going to have a turn at it for the fun of the thing. I have got a spare afternoon and feel bored. This is a godsend. Go at once, my good friend, and bring the man and the tools."

Then as Thompson started off with gleeful pride, the anxious dissembler asked a few questions of the steward, and managed to elicit from him that he had an appointment with one of the tenants.

"Pray don't let me keep you," said Sir Charles, promptly, and so the steward was got rid of.

Sir Charles gave vent to a sigh of relief, and sat down to await the arrival of the tools.

They were not long in coming.

Thompson and a stout but simple-looking under gardener appeared, and Sir Charles, seizing a pick, set to work with a will—with so much energy, indeed, that he found his coat too much of an encumbrance, and, pausing a moment, threw it off, tucking up his shirt sleeves and falling to again as hard as ever.

Mr. Thompson was filled with admiration.

This was something like an aristocratic brick! Here was a man who deserved to be a baronet and a gentleman. Talk of your stuck-up gentry? let some of the prating idiots come and look at this specimen! His admiration was raised to fever heat presently, when Sir Charles, straightening his back, wiped his forehead from its liberal layer of perspiration and with a deep breath started the stupid-looking boy to the Darrell Arms for a gallon of their best ale.

"This is healthy work, and thirsty too," he said, and added after Thompson's delighted "Yes sir," "You have no idea how much good it is doing me,"—which was true, for the poor gardener could not possibly guess that the amiable baronet was working off a load of inward worry and dissatisfaction with every stroke of his spade.

It was a positive relief to Sir Charles, this plain piece of work in the long road of tangled hide and seek, spy, and detective course which he had been following.

The ale appeared and disappeared.

Sir Charles and his men fell to work, and now the aristocratic gardener commenced turning over every spadeful of earth as if searching for something.

"What are you looking for, Sir Charles?" asked Thompson.

"Eh?" said Sir Charles. "Oh, nothing. Fancied I saw a piece of mineral—what do you call it?—ore."

"Ore?" repeated Thompson.

"Y-e-s," said Sir Charles. "Don't you mind me; I am rather given to mineralogy." And he kept his eyes fixed intently upon each spadeful that was turned up.

Away they dug for another half-hour.

Sir Charles became more attentive to each handful of rubbish than before. He had ceased to dig himself, and was leaning on his spade, his eyes fixed upon the hole.

Suddenly he uttered a sharp cry and pointed to something white which the under gardener had just turned up.

Before the cry had quite died away some one from behind said,—

"Good-morning, Sir Charles."

Mr. Thompson stooped to pick up the piece of folded paper, and then turned to see Mr. Reeves, the lawyer.

"What have you got there, Thompson?" he said, holding out his hand.

"A piece of paper of some sort, sir," said the gardener, carefully handing it to him as he spoke. "We are digging up the well, you see, sir. Captain Dartmouth—"

An exclamation from the old lawyer stopped him.

"What's the matter, sir?"

And, following Sir Charles's example, he dropped his spade and jumped out of the hole.

"Who found this?" asked Mr. Reeves, with almost stern gravity.

"I did, sir," replied Mr. Thompson. "At least Sir Charles first saw it as Hodges turned it over."

Mr. Reeves folded the paper and held it firmly in his hand.

"This is a most important document," he said, "most important. Mr. Thompson, have the goodness to send your man for Dr. Todley. I left him walking in the road."

"Certainly, sir," responded the rather alarmed gardener, and Hodges was despatched. He returned in a few minutes with the old doctor.

Sir Charles, with his coat on, now stood pale and motionless, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"Have the goodness to glance at that, Dr. Todley," said Mr. Reeves, in his dry tones.

"Heaven bless me!" exclaimed the doctor, after a few minutes' bewildered perusal. "Why this is—"

"Silence!" said Mr. Reeves. "Not a word, if you please, sir. Sir Charles, Mr. Thompson, you my man, all of you who saw this paper must keep your lips closed concerning it. I shall want you, all of you, to tell some one where and how it was found, but until then have the goodness to keep the matter a profound secret. Sir Charles and you, Thompson, I can depend upon, but this man, is he trustworthy?"

"I can answer for him, sir," replied the gardener. "Hodges will be dumb if I tell him to hold his tongue. Dear me, dear me, I hope nothing is amiss; that is to say—"

"You have no cause for alarm," said Mr. Reeves, "only keep silent. Sir Charles, doctor, have the goodness to accompany me."

Sir Charles and the bewildered physician did as they were ordered, and together the three gentlemen started for the Warren.

CHAPTER L.

THE painfulness of the position in which Mr. Reeves was so unexpectedly placed can easily be understood and appreciated. Here, without a word of notice or note of warning, he had been startled by the announcement of some foul play, some evil work enacted by his most influential client; he had been furthermore requested, and in a measure compelled, to take cause against him; and now, as a finale, to his wonder a positive and irrefutable proof of his client's crime had been placed in his hands.

It was very hard upon him, and for a few minutes the poor old gentleman felt inclined to give up in despair, but Rebecca and Sir Charles would not allow that.

They hedged him round, consoled him, and at last ventured to ask the contents of the sealed and dirty document.

"The contents!" he exclaimed, piteously, feeling the outside of his pocket, and looking sternly straight in front of him. "Why, madam, this paper is nothing more nor less than Harry Darrell's last will."

"Oh," cried Rebecca, sinking into a chair and turning deadly white. "Oh, dear, oh, dear; it is true then. It is true! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! The poor Squire!"

The old lawyer started; her ejaculations brought back to his mind another and more fearful point at issue.

"Ah!" he said, and he rose from his chair. "There is no time to lose. This is fearful. Sir Charles, I would give half the fortune I have honourably earned by many years of honest labour to be able to wash my hands of this! Why, sir," he continued, with grave sternness, "this is more than embezzlement—this is—murder!"

"Murder!" exclaimed Dr. Todley, who had been standing beside Rebecca, in vain endeavouring to calm her. "Murder, Mr. Reeves! Surely I did not hear aright?"

Recalled to his usual calm by the fussy little doctor's exclamation, the lawyer buttoned his coat and beckoned Sir Charles aside.

A short conversation and an excited one on Sir Charles's part ensued, and was terminated by his breaking away and going to Rebecca.

"Rebecca," he said. "Mr. Reeves is obdurate, he will not listen to me; he wishes to place the affair in the hands of—"

"Of the proper authorities," put in Mr. Reeves, sternly. "Madam, this is a clear case for the Treasury. There is sufficient evidence to warrant the arrest of a certain individual. It is your duty, nay more, my duty, to see that it is done; I—"

"No—no," said Rebecca, alarmed. "Mr. Reeves, you will ruin all. Sir Charles, tell him our plan. Oh, pray persuade him."

Sir Charles then communicated a scheme which he and Rebecca had concocted.

It was very simple, but it was some time before the stern, unbending old lawyer would agree to it.

Duty was duty, he declared, and his duty at that crisis was to place the will and the evidence in the hands of the police.

At last, however, he gave way, and, seating himself at Rebecca's writing-table, wrote a short letter to Reginald Dartmouth, requesting his immediate attendance at the new Hall.

"And you think this will catch him," he said, with a glance of contempt.

"I am sure of it," said Rebecca, who had regained her composure. "He has so many plots on hand that he will not be able to guess to which this may refer. The mere uncertainty will bring him here—send it and see."

We left Reginald Dartmouth in his private room. There he had given the finishing touch to his work of villainy.

Now little remained but to reap its fruits. He had communicated the time of their flight to the Countess—he knew that she had understood him, for a messenger had brought an answer of a few words signifying her readiness to carry out his directions.

There he felt himself safe. With a feeling of triumph and exultation he rose the next morning, and after a careful toilet and an elegant breakfast, proceeded to give directions to his secretary.

That gentleman he intended leaving behind to conduct his correspondence and inform him of passing events. He thought he could trust him, he had no suspicion, no doubt whatever.

John Stanfield was, as usual, seated at his writing-table.

As usual he gave no acknowledgment of his master's entrance beyond a slight bow.

Reginald Dartmouth stood looking at him for a moment, then said,—

"Stanfield, I have some matters of importance to go through with you this morning."

The secretary looked up.

"I am going on the Continent for a short time," continued Reginald Dartmouth with his languid air. "I am tired of London, bored with England, a foreign trip will do me good."

The secretary, silent still, inclined his head.

"I shall start by to-morrow night's mail."

The secretary gave the slightest start, too slight to be perceptible.

"I wish you to remain here and keep a lookout on things at the Dale—you understand?"

The secretary nodded.

"I may be away some little time, or I may not. At any rate I shall forward you my address in a day or two; that and all other matters you will keep locked up within your own breast."

Again the silent bow.

"You will want some money. There is a cheque for a reasonable amount. You can write for more if necessary. But, whenever you write, post the letter yourself, with your own hands. Mark that! Now let me see the letters—the private ones—never mind the others."

He seated himself in the easy-chair and lit his cigar with the air of a man who had little on his mind save the weariness of killing time.

The secretary handed him one letter marked private.

A slight frown contracted Reginald Dartmouth's brow as he took it, and a dark shadow of doubt, hesitation and irresolution made it still heavier as he read the short letter.

"When did this come?" he asked.

"It was delivered an hour ago," was the reply.

Reginald Dartmouth rose from the chair, and with the frown still black and heavy, paced the room.

What did it mean? Why could not that old idiot Reeves explain or at least give him a hint of the business he deemed so important? What was he to do—only two days clear, and come what would he must start to-morrow night—what was he to do?

At last he decided, and glancing at his watch said,—

"Order the carriage. I am summoned to Dale. Lose not a moment! I must start by the next train, it leaves in an hour."

He turned to leave the room almost before the last words had left his lips, or most assuredly he would have seen the wonderful expression which lit up the secretary's face.

"An hour!" exclaimed John Stanfield! "Oh, Heaven, be kind and lend me strength of body and mind to keep pace with him. An hour! An hour!"

And with trembling lips and excited eyes the slim, graceful figure of the youth ran with the speed of a fawn down the broad staircase.

CHAPTER LI.

"START at once for the Dale, lose not a moment, you must catch the next train, I will follow you. Do not fail for my sake.—CECIL."

This was the note which was brought to Laurence Harman, as he sat in the dull room at the Royal Hotel; and little faith as he had in Cecil's brilliant schemes, he loved the lad too well to refuse his petition.

The train by which Captain Dartmouth travelled to Dale, carried there also the rightful owner of the grand old place.

Troubled as he was by the lawyer's strange summons, Reginald never suspected the terrible discovery which had been made.

He travelled to Dale with the utmost haste, not only because he was anxious to know the worst, but that he counted the hours till he could return to Lucille.

No carriage met him at the station, but he hired a fly and so was driven quickly to the Hall.

Evidently he was not expected. No servants rushed forward to receive him.

He looked round himself startled by the unusual desertion.

An old man, the porter's father, opened the door, and at last, as the master strode up the steps, white and weary, his eyes all ablaze with passion and annoyance, one footman came forward.

Reginald Dartmouth turned to him with a dark frown.

"Did you not know I was expected?" he asked.

The man stammered something, trembled, and led the way to the library, the door of which he opened, and, stuttering out something that sounded like "Mr. Reeves," hastily retreated before the flashing eyes.

The upright figure of the old lawyer came to meet the captain.

Something in his face stopped the question upon Reginald Dartmouth's lips, and Mr. Reeves spoke first.

"You have come," he said, "and I am thankful. Allow me to close the door."

And he passed behind him and locked it.

Reginald Dartmouth sank into a chair beside the table and tossed his hat to the ground.

"Now, sir," he said, "have the goodness, to tell me plainly why you sent for me?"

"I will," said Mr. Reeves, standing before him with his hands resting upon the table, his face set with an unnatural calm, his eyes sternly piercing, fixed upon the pale, hard face opposite him. "I will, Reginald Dartmouth. In three words, all is discovered!"

There was the slightest start in the world, the merest turn of a hair on the captain's thin lip, and that was all.

"All—discovered? Pray, sir, explain," he said, with a deep sneer.

"Is that necessary?" asked Mr. Reeves, sternly. "Do you wish me to go over the story of your villany, to give your crime its true name?"

Reginald Dartmouth sprang to his feet and made a step towards him, then sank into the chair again and, with a mocking laugh said:

"I see, I see, you are mad—you must be! How and why are you here?"

"I am here to save you from your just punishment, Reginald Dartmouth!" said the old man, calm and cold as ever; "to save you if it be possible, but I feared, nay I fear still, that you will weave your own halter yet. Look, sir, this will speak more plainly perhaps."

And he held out the will, but at a safe distance.

Reginald Dartmouth glanced at it and shuddered.

"What is that?" he said, in a hushed voice that struggled to be mocking still. "What piece of villainous concoction is that, you old thief? For I begin to think you are more rogue than what is it, I ask you?"

"Squire Darrell's last will!" replied Mr. Reeves.

"Well, sir! And if it be why wave it before my eyes? Why do you bring it here? I am well acquainted with its contents."

"And I," said Mr. Reeves. "Before another day has passed the world will be so also; then it will require of your hands one answer to this question: Who stole this will and buried it out of sight? Still more who in stealing it robbed the Squire its maker of his last few hours, and so committed murder?"

At last the captain was roused.

With a bound he sprang at the old lawyer, his face drawn and livid, his hand outstretched like a claw to grasp the precious paper.

But Mr. Reeves had been prepared. Quick as thought he struck the small handbell lying under his hand, and before its warning note had died away the curtains at his back were parted and two figures stood revealed.

Reginald Dartmouth stood transfixed, turned to stone; his upraised hand fell to his side nerveless and purposeless.

"What—what," he cried, huskily, "does all this mean? Charles Anderson! Rebecca! Oh, I see, a nice plot, a nice plot! But you will find we are too many for you. So, you old thief!" he exclaimed, turning his blazing eyes to the old lawyer again, "this is your important business, a vile scheme for extorting money, I suppose! Fitting accomplices, a dishonourable, worn-out roud, a mad, disappointed old maid! Ha! ha! Go on! Play it out, sir, play it out!"

Mr. Reeves, with a look of ineffable scorn, turned to the two silent figures.

"You see!" he said, "as I told you, mercy was thrown away! He will be hanged, and nothing short of it."

Something in the stern, contemptuous tones startled and awed the dauntless villain.

With an oath he sank into the chair again and looked up with a ghastly smile.

"Come," he said, "Play it out. Let me hear. What is this will?—it is a will you say. What is its purport? Where did you find it?"

"We found it where you hid it, Reginald Dartmouth," answered Sir Charles, sternly. "Buried in the old well, at the mention of which you shrank like a whipped hound."

"Its purport," went on Mr. Reeves, "is in favour of the rightful heir—Hugh Darrell. To him is left the estate and money you have first stolen and then squandered."

"And is that all? Is this the matter you make so dramatic a situation from?" retorted the wily captain. "Well, granted all you say, that this will is genuine—grant it for the moment, though without doubt I shall be able to prove it's a forgery. Hugh Darrell is dead, I am the next heir, and I still own the Dale and am left powerful enough to make you smart for this!"

With another glance at the white face of Rebecca, as much as to say "You see—it was useless!" the old lawyer touched the bell again and Mrs. Lucas and Dr. Todley entered.

They shrank from the captain's gaze as they would have done from that of a leper and stood beside Rebecca.

"Look!" exclaimed the lawyer, pointing to them. "Here are the witnesses. Will you hear them give an account of Squire Darrell's last

moments? Shall they tell you what you know already too well? Shall they go through the story of the struggle and the shriek, the overturned candle and the livid marks round the murdered man's throat?"

With a groan of baffled hate, fury, and horrible dread the snared reptile shrank into the shadow of the wall.

"Hush! hush!" he breathed, huskily. "What—is—all this? I tell you it is a vile—conspiracy—conspir-a-cy!"

"You still remain hardened and obdurate? You will not confess?" asked Mr. Reeves. "Then I ring again, this time to summon the detective who waits outside to arrest you!"

"Stop!" shrieked the hunted man. "I—I—the will—will! It is void, useless, and Hugh Darrell is dead! I have proof, certain proof of his death. He is dead—dead!"

At that moment a noise, the clattering of wheels and a Babel of voices reached the room.

"Dead!" wailed Rebecca, and staggered against the wall.

"Yes, dead!" repeated the wily villain, seizing his advantage. "Now what is your will?—waste paper, waste paper!—unless Hugh Darrell rises from the grave to claim his own!"

The clatter came nearer, grew louder, the locked door was burst open with one blow from an iron hand and a stalwart figure with a tanned, stern face stood in the opening!

To attempt to describe the utter astonishment and consternation that filled the bosoms of the six persons who turned their eyes upon the stalwart figure in the doorway would be courting failure.

For a moment or two there was a solemn, awful silence; then Rebecca broke it with a cry and with one word,—

"Hugh!"

At the same time she and Mrs. Lucas, sobbing, turned to him and caught his arm.

Then the old lawyer and doctor pressed forward to shake hands, leaving Sir Charles and Reginald Dartmouth where they had stood before Hugh entered, staring still.

Laury, or Hugh Darrell—for it was he—shook the hands outstretched to him, and murmured a few words to the women hanging on his arm, then he turned, with a puzzled and somewhat frowning brow, to the other two gentlemen.

Mr. Reeves, the first to recover his composure, hastened to explain.

"Mr. Darrell," he said, "your arrival is opportune—nay, miraculously so. This person," indicating Reginald Dartmouth, who stood keenly watching his handsome kinsman with white face and glittering eyes, "this person is Reginald Dartmouth, your cousin."

Hugh disengaged himself gently, strode forward and held out his hand.

With a mocking smile Reginald Dartmouth would have taken it, but the old lawyer, with an indignant flush, stepped in between and caught Hugh's hand before Reginald had touched it.

Hugh looked up with a glance of amazement, the other with an evil frown.

"It may seem strange and unaccountable," said Mr. Reeves, answering Hugh's look; "but wait till you hear a statement I have to make before you touch that man's hand in friendship."

Hugh's hand dropped to his side, and, looking round slowly, he said, in his old deep and melodiously grave voice,—

"For Heaven's sake! be quick, sir! I seem to be in a dream. This gentleman is the owner of the Dale, I presume?"

Reginald Dartmouth nodded, but Mr. Reeves, seemingly provoked beyond endurance by his cool insolence, exclaimed,—

"No! How dare you say 'yes,' sir? Hugh Darrell, the Dale is yours and has been yours since the moment the breath left your father's body. This is no time for an explanation, but you see before you there a villain who by a series of daring crimes has usurped your estate and squandered your property! Silence!" he continued, his calm face working with passion as Reginald Dartmouth made a step forward and seemed about to speak. "At the moment of your entrance," he continued, turning to Hugh, who looked from one to the other with a bewildered

but stern expression of interrogation, "at the moment of your entrance I was taxing Captain Dartmouth with his crimes. Here beside you are the witnesses who can and will hang him; here beneath my hand lies the last will of your father which the villain changed for an earlier one leaving the estates to him. This last and valid will, bequeaths all to you save a small sum to him. Read it."

And he held it out.

Hugh took it and glanced at the heading, then with his eyes full of tears shook his head and returned it.

"I cannot read it," he said, simply, "my brain is in a whirl. Rebecca, what is all this I hear?"

Rebecca could only sob afresh and murmur,—

"It's all true, Hugh, all true."

Then Hugh turned to Reginald Dartmouth.

"And what say you to this accusation, sir?" he demanded, sternly.

Reginald Dartmouth, who had been watching the faces around him with keen attention and noting every tone as well as every word of each speaker, replied, with a coolness which his white face and livid lips belied,—

"What have I to say, Mr. Darrell, for I presume you are the long-lost Hugh Darrell? Simply this, and this only, that I do not deign to answer such absurd and groundless accusations as this person has made."

And as he spoke he drew himself up with an air of defiance.

Hugh regarded him with a long and piercing gaze.

"So, that is your reply, sir?" he said, with slow distinctness. "It sounds to me somewhat guilty. But we will hear what Mr. Reeves has to say. And you, sir, may I beg the honour of your name?"

And he looked at Sir Charles.

"This gentleman," said Mr. Reeves, "is Sir Charles Anderson, a cousin of Miss Goodman. He has been a true friend to you, though an unknown one. He it was who discovered this will, and through his means we have been able to lay a still greater crime at Captain Dartmouth's door."

Hugh held out his hand with a grave courtesy. Sir Charles took it and pressed it eagerly, glancing at Rebecca as he did so.

"Now, sir," said Hugh, turning to the lawyer, "let us hear your statement."

Mr. Reeves, with his hand on the table and his eyes fixed upon Reginald Dartmouth, commenced to speak; but the accused interrupted him with a scornful gesture.

"Pardon me," he said, "I have listened to a long tirade once before this evening. I have travelled far—beguiled hither by a false and dishonourable ruse—I refuse to submit to further indignity. Your absurd romance, sir, can be recited in my absence, I presume. Whether it can or cannot I must beg to be allowed to depart. Business of an important nature compels my immediate return to town," he continued, with calm nonchalance, addressing Hugh. "If you wish to communicate with me, either through this—this person, your solicitor, or personally, Mr. Darrell, here is my London address."

And with a scornful air he threw his card upon the table, and made a movement towards the door.

Mr. Reeves stepped before him.

"Softly, sir," he exclaimed, in his old dry tone. "Your presence cannot be so easily dispensed with. You will please consider yourself our prisoner!"

"Your prisoner!" repeated Reginald Dartmouth, with a dark sneer. "Pray, sir, how long have you held the office of parish constable—nay, do not trouble to answer, but first produce your warrant."

Mr. Reeves's face darkened.

"You wish to drive me to extremities?" he said, significantly.

"I do," retorted Reginald Dartmouth, defiantly.

"Produce your warrant—or let me pass."

Mr. Reeves stood aside.

"Go!" he said. "And make good use of your start. Before an hour has passed the warrant you desire shall follow you."

With another sneer the wily villain turned to shoot a glance of hate around and left the room.

Hugh passed his hand across his brow, and with a heavy sigh sank into the chair Reginald Dartmouth had vacated.

Was it for this he had returned? To find his father dead? To unmask a villain? And where was Cecil whose note had brought him to Dale, and whose face was the dearest to him on earth?

But Hugh had to speak to the friends gathered there; he shook hands with Mr. Reeves and then spoke to Rebecca, who had risen and now stood with downcast eyes before him.

"Rebecca," he said, "I must call you by the old name—we shall all awake directly. Tell me, are you glad to see me?"

"Oh, so glad, so very glad," answered Rebecca, with a burst of emotion. "Hugh! Hugh! why have you stayed away so long? Why did you leave your father to that sinful man?"

Hugh's face darkened.

"Because—"

There he broke off.

"We will have no more explanations to night. Sir Charles, you will comprehend my utter ignorance when I tell you that I know not if I am safe in offering you the hospitality of the Dale. Nay," he continued, turning sadly to Mr. Reeves, "I scarcely know that I am not wrong in calling it the Dale—it is so changed!"

Mr. Reeves groaned.

"Changed, indeed," he said. "What I have to tell you! But there, as you say, there must be no explanations to-night. You must be tired. Miss Goodman has offered you hospitality until the Dale can be made ready."

"Come, Hugh, do come," pleaded Rebecca. "Mr. Reeves and all of you come and help me to bear all this, or I shall give way. Oh, Hugh, Hugh—why did you stay away?"

She seemed so excited and overwhelmed by a combination of feelings that Sir Charles judged it best to gently remove her from the apartment, and, aided by Mrs. Lucas and Dr. Todley, got her to the carriage which was waiting.

Leaving her in their charge, and whispering some soothing words, Sir Charles returned to the library, where, notwithstanding his decision not to enter into explanations, Mr. Reeves was telling the newly arrived heir the story of the hidden will.

Hugh listened with his face concealed by his hand, but the two could see he was weeping, and that the story of his father's death was affecting him more than anything, and leaving no room in his mind for the recital of Reginald Dartmouth's evil deeds.

Mr. Reeves traced the course of events—with the before-mentioned omission—up to Hugh's sudden and opportune arrival, then broke off with,—

"But there, I've done what I had sternly decided not to do, harassed and tortured you, already wearied, much wearied, by the story of the whole affair. Now, sir, ere I am silent let me ask you one question. How did you get here at this critical moment? Was it a mere chance?"

Hugh looked up with a strange expression and a dash of colour that was almost a blush.

"Not chance, certainly," he said, with hesitation.

"You have only just arrived in England, of course?" said Sir Charles.

"No," said Hugh, "I have been in England some few days. The story's too long, or I'd tell you. As to how I came upon the scene at this late hour, I may say that I came—by invitation."

"By invitation!" exclaimed Sir Charles, in bewilderment; but all felt it was not the time for explanation then, and soon after the three men started for the Warren.

(To be continued.)

THEY encourage matrimony in Albania. When a girl wants to get married, she collects all her little store of gold, and mounts the coins in her cap. You can then see what she is worth, and the young fellows don't want big fortunes with their brides in that country.

OUT OF THE STORM.

—10:—

(Continued from page 585.)

During the whole of the morning Marigold was alone. Early in the afternoon Cyril again came in to tell her to put her hat and mantle on, ready to go down to the docks.

"Your father is already aboard the *City of* —," he said, "and I shall drive down with you as soon as you are ready."

She made no remark. He watched her suspiciously while she attired herself in her outdoor garments, apparently surprised at her silent acquiescence.

At the door the cab was waiting. He helped her in, then took his seat beside her, and glanced at his watch.

"We shall be in good time," he observed. "The ship does not start till four o'clock, and it is not yet three. I am glad to see that my prophecy has been fulfilled, and that you see the uselessness of struggling against the inevitable."

Marigold's lips closed firmly together, as if she would shut in the words trembling on them. Cyril looked away from her to gaze first out of one window of the cab and then the other, in a way that struck her as furtively apprehensive. He was clearly not at his ease. She wondered what he feared.

Presently they arrived at the docks where the great vessel was waiting; a good many people were already on deck, and a moving crowd streamed up and down the gangway. Husband and wife joined Robert Craven, who was leaning on the bulwarks, watching with lazy curiosity the surging mass below. He turned round to welcome his stepdaughter; but the idle words of greeting he would have spoken, died away unuttered before the expression in her face. She was very pale, and yet a whole world of determination shone in her clear, dark eyes. She looked no longer the fragile, tired girl of last night, but a woman who would leave no stone unturned in her endeavour to free herself from a hateful tyranny.

"I am on board this vessel, but I have not the slightest intention of going with her to America," she said, addressing herself to Cyril in low, but perfectly distinct, accents, that absolutely compelled attention. "I know quite well that as my husband you have a right to insist on my accompanying you, but, if you do insist, I shall be forced to a desperate measure, which, under other conditions, I should hesitate to take. In other words, I shall give you, Cyril Stanmore, in charge on suspicion of having shot your kinsman, Philip Stanmore, with intent to kill him!"

If a bomb had suddenly exploded at his feet, Gasgoine could not have appeared more astonished or alarmed. He was totally unprepared for this, and it took him at a complete disadvantage. For the moment he could only stare helplessly at his wife, too staggered to utter a word.

Craven looked from him to Marigold.

"What is the meaning of this? I know nothing about it," he said.

"I will explain," Marigold went on, in the same tone of quiet power. "On the night of the 22nd of June Philip Stanmore was fired at by a man who had passed me in the Helston Plantation a little while before, and who, I am ready to swear, is identical with the person who married me under the name of Cyril Gasgoine. He was wearing a false beard and wig, which you will find in that bag"—pointing to it as she spoke—"and there you will also find the revolver with which Mr. Stanmore was wounded. The bullet has been extracted from his wound, and is now in the hands of the police, ready to be compared with those still in the possession of the owner of the wig and beard. If further evidence is needed I am pretty sure it will be forthcoming; but what I have already adduced is quite sufficient to justify his arrest." She turned to her husband, her composure unruined. "I leave you to make your choice. Will you go to America leaving me behind, and taking with you my promise that, so long as you leave me unmolested, so long will I respect your secret, or shall I go

straight to the captain of this ship, and lay my information before him?"

If she had betrayed the smallest symptom of hesitation, Gasgoine would have braved it out, but the calm assurance of her manner told him that her words were no idle threats, and that any resistance on his part would be the signal for her to seek the captain forthwith. How she gained her knowledge he could not tell, but it would have been utter folly to deny the truth of her assertion.

Before he could make up his mind what to say, Craven took the initiative.

"Look here, Gasgoine, if this is true—and remembering your mysterious journey on the 22nd of June I firmly believe Marigold has only stated facts—I shall wash my hands of you altogether. I have not the smallest desire to mix myself up with a criminal, who may at any moment make his appearance at the bar of justice. If you'll take my advice, you'll accept your wife's terms, and go to New York—alone."

"Leaving you to the enjoyment of her fortune!" sneered Gasgoine—as we will still continue to call him—whose face had grown dark with malignant passion. "A very pretty arrangement, upon my word, but one to which I will never agree."

At that moment a slim, dark clean-shaven man approached the group. His keen eyes fixed themselves at once on Cyril.

"Mr. Cyril Stanmore, otherwise Gasgoine?" he said, interrogatively, "yes, I see I am right by the address on your bag," he added, quietly. "It is my painful duty to arrest you, sir."

Cyril started back, grasping the bulwark by which to steady himself.

"On what charge?" he exclaimed, hoarsely, as soon as he could command his voice.

"That of forgery and attempted murder. You had better come quietly, sir, there is no necessity to make a scene."

But Cyril, already infuriated by Marigold's unexpected resistance, was rendered completely desperate by this overthrow of all his schemes, and as the detective laid a hand on his wrist, he flung it passionately on one side, at the same time drawing from an inner breast pocket the revolver his wife had seen in the Gladstone bag the night before.

"I will shoot dead the first man that ventures to lay hands on me!" he exclaimed, in a frenzy of excitement that was little removed from madness, and at the same moment he sprang forward, apparently with the intention of leaving the ship and effecting his escape.

But the detective was not to be baulked thus of his prisoner, whose movements he had watched as a cat watches the movements of a mouse. At Cyril's first sign of flight, he was after him, and his grasp, as it closed round the wretched man's arm, was firm as a vice. Cyril tried in vain to shake it off.

"Unhand me!" he cried in a rough whisper, but he might as well have spoken to a machine. Suddenly his arm was jerked up, there was a report, a cry of pain, and Marigold saw him sink on the deck, shot—accidentally by his own hand.

It was Robert Craven who took his stepdaughter to an hotel, and did his best by care and attention to make some atonement for the misery that had been brought about by his treatment of her, and which had culminated in the scene of horror on the *City of* —. Some days elapsed before Marigold was well enough to listen to details of the tragedy, and in the meantime an inquest had been held on the body of her husband, and a verdict of "Accidental death" returned. At the inquest it transpired that Philip Stanmore knew nothing of the contemplated arrest of his cousin, against whom a warrant had long been out, for forging the name of a certain Jewish money-lender some months before. On the discovery of his crime Cyril Stanmore had left London for Westpool, where he changed his name, and intended remaining until he could get safely out of the country. His cousin Philip was the only person to whom he confided his address, and the latter had come to Westpool to get details, and see if

something could not be done for this family black sheep.

The money-lender had given it to be understood that he was willing to compromise the matter in consideration of receiving a very large sum—which sum Philip did not feel himself justified in giving. He had already done a great deal for his spendthrift cousin, whose reformation he knew it was hopeless to expect, and he had therefore given him a sufficient sum to pay for his passage to America, and left him at Westpool, with the advice to cross the Atlantic as soon as he found he could do it with safety. But this advice was by no means palatable to Cyril, who had not any fancy for earning his own living, and who, as we know, had lingered on at Westpool in the hope of obtaining a rich wife. With her wealth, he calculated, he could either satisfy the money-lender's claim, and remain in England, or could escape to a foreign country, taking the fortune with him. In this purpose he was defeated, and it was then he had formed the desperate plan of shooting Philip, whose heir he was.

Accident had thrown him up against Robert Craven just before his last visit to Helston Chase, and on his return he chanced to see a photograph of Marigold in the elder man's possession.

Mutual confidences ensued, and he found to his surprise and delight that so far from being a "penniless bride," Marigold would, on attaining the age of twenty-one, come into a considerable fortune, which had been left her by an eccentric great aunt, on the understanding that she was not to touch a farthing of it until she attained her majority or until she married.

This, Craven explained to Marigold during his first interview with her after Cyril's death, for he had decided that, after all, honesty would be the best policy.

"I understand everything now," she said, looking at him with undisguised contempt. "I suppose you had planned with your nephew Vale Craven, to share my fortune if you could persuade me to marry him, and doubtless some similar arrangement was made with Cyril Stanmore. As trustee, you had, naturally, a good deal of power, and it was to be exerted for your own benefit."

Craven stroked his moustache uneasily, but did not attempt to deny her conclusion.

"I hope you won't be too hard on me, Marigold," he said, humbly. "I am a poor man, and not so young as I was. You can afford to be generous. Besides, you will remember that as soon as I knew Cyril had attempted the life of his cousin, I dropped him, and at once ranged myself on your side."

Perhaps this fact was not without its effects on Marigold, who settled an annuity on him, on condition that he never made any attempt to approach her.

Twelve months later a very quiet wedding took place in a certain London church, when Marigold and Philip Stanmore plighted their troth to each other. The only persons present were Captain and Mrs. Smyth—formerly Edith Blessington—and good Mrs. Packe. It was but natural that as she came from the altar, leaning on her husband's arm, Marigold should think of that other wedding, at the dreary Registrar's office, the falling rain, the grey skies, the muddy pavements. Now the sunshine fell with a bounteous splendour through the coloured glories of the stained glass windows, the skies were blue, the soft summer breezes touched her face like a caress. Looking up, her eyes met those of her husband, shining with love and tenderness, and she pressed a little closer to him with a sudden movement of instinctive trust.

She knew that he was taking her beyond the reach of the storm into the gladsome light of love!

[THE END.]

AUNT LIZZIE'S LOVER.

—101—

MRS. BELTON—bless her kind heart!—was not of a jealous nature. It does not behove a minister's wife to be jealous; but the dinner was already on the table—a well-browned roast chicken, with bread sauce, and a baked Indian pudding to follow—and it was undoubtedly a relief when her husband came out of the study and seated himself.

"Was that Miss Harcourt?" said she. "Yes," Mr. Belton answered, "it was Miss Harcourt. She wants to sell her old mahogany settle."

"What!" cried Mrs. Belton, "that delightful old settle, with the griffins' bumpy heads at the top and the claw feet at the bottom? I didn't know that anything would induce her to part with that."

And then Mr. Belton pronounced the blessing. "I wish I could afford to buy it!" added Mrs. Belton, tucking a bib-apron under the youngest child's plump chin. "What did you tell her, Charles?"

"Why, I told her I'd write to that big antique-buying firm in London," said Mr. Belton. "They're the only people who can deal with her to any advantage. A big hall-settle like that is only appropriate for big houses, with wide entrances, such as, according to all reports, that poor, desolate old maid once lived in. And big houses are mostly found in big cities."

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Belton.

And she helped her husband to bread sauce, while Eliza Harcourt went slowly home to the old red house under the hill, where Babs was making tomato catsup in the kitchen.

"Well, Barbara," said she, "I've done it."

"Done what, Aunt Lizzie?"

"I've sold the old hall-settle."

Babs looked up from the scarlet steam of the tomatoes to the cool hall opposite, where the griffin's wooden eye seemed to leer at her out of the shadows, and one carved and shining claw was poised on the floor, as if about to take a forward step.

"Oh, Aunt Lizzie!" said she.

"Yes, I know," sighed the elder woman. "But there's got to be an end to everything, Barbara. I'm a poor woman now, and I can't afford to hold on to luxuries that are nothing but luxuries."

"But," gasped Babs, stirring away with spasmodic vigour at the tomatoes, "Grandfather Harcourt brought that settle from Holland himself, and it's two hundred years old! And it's the last relic of the old house on the hill!"

"Still," reasoned Miss Harcourt, looking away over the blue Indian summer haze toward the yellowing forests, "I've no right to keep it, Babs. It's been almost a matter of idolatry with me, and perhaps I'd better let it go. We are poor, Babs—very poor."

Barbara lifted the kettle off the stove.

"It's no disgrace," said she, with a comical grimace; "but it's most uncommonly inconvenient."

"If you feel that way, Barbara," said Miss Harcourt, "I don't see why you refused Bertrand Colby last week."

"Why," said Babs, opening her blue eyes very wide, "because I didn't love him!"

"He's very rich, Babs."

"He's welcome to his money, Aunt Lizzie."

"My goodness me," said Miss Harcourt, putting on her spectacles (alas! what a trial to her pride that first pair of steel-rimmed spectacles had been!), "who's that driving down the road in a covered cart?"

Babs stepped back into the shadow.

"I don't know," said she, "but—I think it's Bertie Dunbar."

"Oh!" said Miss Harcourt. "Has that young man gone into the express business?"

"Not exactly," said Babs, busying herself among the tomato jars. "But I think he drives round picking up old china and brass fire-dogs, and all such things, for some big collector in London."

"Oh!" again uttered Miss Harcourt.

And there was a whole volume of meaning in the one little word.

"He's a very nice young man," said Babs, timidly.

"I don't doubt it," said Miss Harcourt. "But I wonder what he wants here?"

The little discussion was terminated by the sudden tapping of Bertie Dunbar's whip-handle against the side of the open door.

Yes, he was a very nice young man, blue-eyed and frank-faced, with yellow hair curling away from his temples, and white teeth which shone every time he smiled.

He had only been in Dashville a few weeks. Miss Harcourt had seen him now and then, but she hardly remembered him.

"How do you do, Miss Harcourt?" said he, with stupendous self-possession.

"Mr. Dunbar, aunt," said Babs, in a hurried sort of way. "This is my aunt, Miss Harcourt, Bertie."

"I don't know what has procured me the honour of this call," said Miss Harcourt, straightening herself up.

For she never could forget, this poor faded, elderly woman, that her father, Squire Harcourt had once been the richest man in the county.

"Well, I don't know much about the honour of the thing," said Bertie, laughing; but I've just heard from Mr. Belton that you wanted to sell an old carved settle. I'm buying up that sort of thing."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Perhaps you would allow me to look at it?" went on Bertie, resolved on business.

Babs flung open the hall window that was generally kept closed and curtained. A blaze of yellow sunshine flooded the hall, a gust of sweet, autumn leaf-scented air came in, and the carved griffins seemed to wink their wooden satisfaction.

"There," cried Babs. "Isn't it a beauty? And heavy—oh, what a piece of solid heaviness! Oh, that isn't a secret drawer! It's only a place to put umbrellas and canes in. I used to be certain there was a secret drawer in it when I was a child. But I've changed my mind now."

Bertie Dunbar walked slowly around the settle eyeing it from every point of view. Miss Harcourt watched him.

"Yes, it is a beauty!" said he. "What will you take for it, Miss Harcourt?"

"I hardly think you can afford to buy it, young man," said the elder lady, grimly.

Bertie Dunbar reddened a little.

"Oh, as for that," said he, rather awkwardly, "I'm representing some one else. Personally, perhaps—"

"Well," said Miss Harcourt, "it cost a hundred pounds. But I don't expect to get its full value."

"Aunt Eliza would take fifty," fluttered Babs, "if—"

"Very well," said Mr. Dunbar, "it's a bargain. Is there a man about the place who could help me lift it into the wagon?"

"There's old Bill Matthews, beyond the big rock," suggested Babs.

And while Bertie Dunbar was gone for him, the old lady sat down on the settle, where the yellow sunshine glimmered, and the smell of late mignonette came in at the window.

"Here was where I used to sit," said she. "There was a big stained glass window in the hall just over it, and a great fireplace beyond, where they burned such big black logs of cold winter nights. And there in the other corner my lover used to sit."

Her voice quivered; a tear sparkled in the faded blue eyes behind the steel-rimmed spectacles.

"Oh, Aunt Eliza," cried Babs, suddenly flinging her arms around the old lady's neck, "I never knew you had a lover."

"Does any woman ever live to be twenty without a lover, child?" said Miss Harcourt. "But your grandfather was a very ambitious man. He was losing money in those South Sea shipping ventures even then, though I didn't know it—and he wanted me to marry a rich man and retrieve the family fortunes. And Stephen was poor."

"Was that his name, Aunt Eliza?"

"So I never married at all," went on Miss Harcourt. "Good-bye, old settle!"

ONE penalty of infraction of French prison discipline is seating the prisoner on the ground, bound hand and foot with strong belts fastened to rings in the wall, so that he cannot stir.

And, with infinite pathos, she touched her lips lightly to the biggest of the griffins' heads.

But Babs held tight to her aunt's hand; she clung around her neck with passionate kisses.

"Now you know, Aunt Eliza," said she, almost in a sob, "why I didn't accept Bertrand Colby! Now you know why I love Bertie Dunbar. Bertie isn't rich, but neither was your Stephen. Oh, Aunt Eliza, you won't blame me!"

"Dear me," said Miss Harcourt, in a sort of bewildered way. "You don't mean to say—"

"Yes, I do," said Babs, turning pink and white, like the tall holyhocks at the garden gate. "It was only last night, when we walked home from church together. I couldn't think of what Mr. Belton was saying because of Bertie's blue eyes, and it all seemed like a dream to me until he asked me to try and love him a little."

"And do you love him, Barbara?"

"I'd ride around the whole world with him in that old covered cart, if only you say yes!" sobbed the girl. "I don't care for money or rank. I only know that I love Bertie!"

And she slipped back into the shadows as Bertie Dunbar and old Bill Matthew came to lift out the mahogany settle.

Miss Harcourt watched them through a mist of tears.

Here was the blossoming out of truth and love, and all that blessed disregard of ways and means that only comes in the dawn of life. She had outgrown it all, but it was a story that repeated itself with each new generation.

She remembered that Mr. Belton said that Bertie Dunbar was a good young fellow enough. She looked at the old settle, where she and Stephen Evans had sat years ago, and she beckoned softly to Babs.

"Barbara," said she, "if you love the lad, take him. I—I was young once!"

And then she went back into the house so that she might not see the old griffins with the claw feet, being carried away.

Only two weeks afterward Babs came eagerly to her aunt.

"Bertie's uncle is coming down from London," said she—"the gentleman who bought the mahogany settle. It wasn't for a store, Aunt Eliza, that Bertie bought it. It was for his own house. He's very rich, and Bertie is his only heir. And he liked my photograph, and he's coming to see you to-night. Doesn't it sound exactly like a newspaper story?" faltered happy Babs. "Who's that knocking at the door? It can't be Bertie's uncle already?"

Miss Harcourt's drawn face had brightened into sudden radiance.

"It is Babs!" said she, with a start.

Babs looked half frightened, but at the same moment the door opened, and Bertie Dunbar came in with another gentleman, grey and portly.

"He arrived by the four o'clock train, Babs," said he. "And only think—he used to know your aunt a quarter of a century ago!"

"Stephen!" faltered Miss Harcourt. "Eliza!"

To the young people, full of the ineffable arrogance of youth, it was the meeting of two grey, wrinkled old people—to Stephen Evans and Eliza Harcourt, time had gone backward, and they stood, radiantly happy, on the threshold of long ago.

"Eliza, why did you not tell me where you were?"

"Stephen, why did you not say something to let me know you cared for me still?"

And the next day all Dashville was convulsed with the news that there was to be a double wedding in the place.

"As for Bertie Dunbar and pretty Barbara Harcourt, it's all right and proper enough," said the voice of popular opinion. "But for old people like Miss Harcourt and that fat City man—well, no one can set limits to the ridiculous!"

But how was popular opinion to know that, to all intents and purposes, Uncle Stephen and Aunt Eliza had been dipped in the waters of the fountain of youth?

Bertie and Barbara might go to Richmond on their wedding trip; but was it not happiness enough for their elders to sit side by side on the old mahogany settle once more?

FACETIÆ.

ECONOMICAL.—Clairette: "What are you going to give me, papa, when I get married?" Her father: "My consent, Clairette."

MAMMA: "You careless boy! You've spilled your coffee over your new trousers." Benny: "Well, there's plenty more coffee, ain't there?"

SURE TO MAKE A SALE.—Miss Passeur (aged forty): "I wish to see a bonnet." French Milliner: "For yourself, miss?" Miss Passeur: "Yes." French Milliner: "Marie, run downstairs and get me ze hats for ze ladies between eighteen and twenty-five years."

In a lawsuit over an old painting, some experts valued it at £20 and some at £500. The £20 experts could plainly discern that it was a portrait of a child, while the £500 judges were unable to determine whether it was a storm at sea or the death of Shakespeare.

MADAME NUFLYE (whispering to her father from the country, who is dining with her and a party of city guests): "Father! you mustn't tuck your napkin under your chin." Her father (in robust tones): "I know it, Em'ly. But I ain't got no safety-pin fer to fix it."

PUBLISHER: "Good! That song will take the town. Give me the manuscript, quick." Composer: "But it hasn't any words yet." "Weren't you singing words?" "No, I just sang 'la-lalum-tum-tiddle-dee-la-la,' etc." "Well, they'll do as well as any. Hurry up and write 'em down."

ETHEL: "Mr. Batchelor, did you make any good resolutions for 1894?" Mr. Batchelor: "I made one, Miss Ethel; but you must help me to keep it." Ethel (deeply interested): "With pleasure; what was it?" Mr. Batchelor: "I resolved that we would get married." The cards are now out.

LADY: "You look ill." Shop Girl: "I have been sick, but am better now. The doctor said it was nervous prostration, from trying so hard to smile and look pleasant when I did not feel like it." "I can sympathize with you. I know all about it." "Have you ever worked in a store?" "Worse. I've moved in society."

"Oh, we had the loveliest arrangement at our church society last week. Every woman contributed to the missionary cause one pound which she earned herself by hard work." "How did you get yours?" "From my husband." "I shouldn't call that earning it yourself by hard work." "You don't know my husband."

FOND MOTHER (to daughter): "Jennie, did you kiss young Podmore again to-night?" Daughter: "Yes, mamma; he's just lost an uncle, and I was sorry for him." Fond Mother: "Well, Jennie, let this be the last. I'm afraid, if you keep on encouraging him with your sympathy, he won't have a relative left in the wide, wide world."

FIRST ACTOR (pulling the trigger of a revolver six times): "Die, you miserable villain!" Second Actor: "Your pistol has missed fire, Sir Rudolph; but I am smitten with remorse for my many crimes, and will die, according to your wish." Then he rolled on the stage in agony, while the curtain slowly descended, amid the cheers and laughter of the audience.

A **TENANT** went to see his landlord about a house he had just rented, and about which he had some fault to find. He mentioned several drawbacks, and then said, "And furthermore, Mr. Oppenheimer, the cellar is full of water." Mr. Oppenheimer, the landlord, eyed him with reproach, and then exclaimed, "Vull of vater! Vell, vat you expect— Vull of champagne!"

"MISS BIRDIE, do you know that you have robbed me of my peace of mind—that on your account I cannot sleep!" said young Spooner to Miss McGinnis, Spooner being a boarder with the McGinnis family. "This is so sudden; however, you had better speak to my mother, Mr. Spooner," replied the young lady, smirking. "Speak to your mother! I thought it was you who banged that piano in the parlour until one o'clock every night."

He had put the fatal question to her on the grand stand at the races, and she answered no. "Is there no chance of your ever loving me?" he pleaded. "The odds are a thousand to one against it," was the pitiless reply. He sighed, then braced himself up. "It's a long shot," he said at last; "but with nothing else in the field I'll take it!"

A **JOVIAL** old lady travelling in an omnibus the other day, and who was evidently in high spirits, thought to have a little joke at the expense of the conductor. "And how much d'ye get a week, young man?" "Twenty-eight shillings, marm." "What, all that for running up those steps all day!" "No marm. I'm half my time running down."

A **YOUNGSTER** who was recently sent to a preparatory school does not much fancy the change. He is suffering from his first attack of homesickness, and naturally desires to return home. In making known his wish to his father in a recent letter, he said: "Dear Father,—Life is very short; let us spend it together.—Your affectionate son."

"WHAT a wonderful girl," exclaimed the enthusiastic professor of history, "was Joan of Arc. Think of her leaving her peasant home and going out, as one inspired, to lead the armies of France. Was she ordinary flesh and blood? Was she human? Who knows what she was made of?" "I do," solemnly remarked an earnest student at the foot of the class. "She was Maid of Orleans."

THE young man was talking to the wealthy widow on the absorbing topic of marrying her daughter. In fact he had gained the widow's consent to the match and she was adding a few flourishes to the daughter. "You know," she said, rather diffidently, "that my daughter is not poor." "Oh," he responded encouragingly, "don't worry about that. I'm poor enough for two."

PUBLISHER: "No, madam, your novel won't do. The plot is too absurdly improbable." Authoress: "Improbable! It is a story of everyday life in a college town." "Look at this. The hero is a college man who plays football. Within a week after a game he meets the heroine and proposes to her—proposes to her on his knees." "Well!" "Well, whoever heard of a football player able to bend his knees within a week after a game?"

THEATRICAL MANAGER: "Didn't I hear you making some talk about there not being enough realism in this play, Mr. Walker?" Leading Man: "I did say something of the kind, sir." "We already have real horses, real water, a real sausage-chopper, real snakes in the delirium scene, and real turnips in the gorgeous banquet scene. What more do you want?" "Well, I should like a little real applause at each performance, and real money on salary days!"

YOUNG Mrs. Gotrox (at her first breakfast with her elderly "catch") said to her husband, "You eat with your knife, don't you, John, dear?" Old Mr. Gotrox (noticing his opportunity, and with severity and dignity), "No, madam, I do not. I eat with my mouth. I frequently convey food from my plate to my facial aperture with my knife, but I do my own eating with my own exclusive mouth, and until further notice I will myself furnish all the instructions about the methods to be employed."

A **CELEBRATED** French actor came over to England; he had studied the English language carefully. His friends were a little anxious about his powers of acquiring its difficult pronunciation, but he said he felt confident that, well made up and by gaslight, his accent would pass muster. But, alas! he was over-hopeful. The crucial evening arrived, and he wanted, at the most pathetic moment of the play, to exclaim, in broken-voiced despair, "I shall die! I shall die! there is peace in the grave;" but his histrionic powers carried him away, and he forgot his carefully prepared pronunciation, and, in heart-broken tones, he sobbed forth: "I shall die, I shall die! there is peace in the grave!" And then he could not understand why all the theatre shouted with laughter.

SOCIETY.

THE Empress Frederick is never present at a Drawing Room, as it would be inconsistent with the etiquette of the German court.

THE latest Royal convert to cyclism is the King of the Belgians, who now takes an hour or two's exercise regularly every morning on a Humber tricycle in one of the Avenues adjoining the Lacken Palace.

THE Princess of Wales wore a white satin dress with blue velvet train at the first Drawing Room held after her marriage, when she made her debut as the Queen's representative.

THE Duke and Duchess of Coburg are to come to England in the season, and will probably spend about six weeks at Clarence House, and give some rather elaborate entertainments during their visit.

THE Queen was asked to purchase the necklace, earrings and brooch, in the Eglinton collection of jewels, which had belonged to Mary Queen of Scots, but her Majesty declined, as Queen Mary is not one of her "favourites."

THE King of Portugal has sent the Duchess of York the Order of St. Elizabeth, as a little compliment; and when her Royal Highness is able to appear at Court in full panoply, the novelty will doubtless be forthcoming.

THE Hereditary Prince Emich of Leiningen was born at Osborne on January 18th, 1866, and is the only son of the reigning Prince Ernst of Leiningen and his wife, Princess Marie of Baden. He is a lieutenant in the Garde Jäger regiment stationed in Potsdam.

ALL the servants who were in the Queen's household during the lifetime of the Prince Consort receive each Christmas pieces of solid silver, in any shape they prefer, up to a certain value. They are sent with a large black-bordered card, inscribed, "With good wishes from Her Majesty and the Prince Consort."

PRINCESS VICTORIA'S trousseau is being prepared in England, and it will be as complete and handsome as that made for her elder sister, the Crown Princess of Roumania. The Duchess, who was always popular at Coburg and Gotha, where she did endless good, and was the friend of every good cause, as a Reigning Duchess, earning the most golden opinions.

THE Princess of Wales looks decidedly better than she did at the time of the Royal wedding, and her smile is as bright and as sweet as ever. She has evidently almost shaken off the depression from which she has so much suffered, and her resumption of public duties will doubtless help to complete the cure.

IT is probable that the public demonstration at Brussels in May, on the occasion of the wedding of the Princess Josephine of Belgium, will take the form of a monster floral fête. The scheme is certainly appropriate to the month, and the experiment was tried with immense success fourteen years ago, when the Princess Stéphanie married the late Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria.

THE Villa Fabbicotti was built between 1865 and 1867, under the direction of the well-known architect Micheli, and it stands on the Montughi Hill, to the left of the Bologna road. The present house occupies the site of the famous Villa degli Ancipressi, which belonged for five centuries to one of the most distinguished Florentine families. The sitting-rooms are all large, and superbly ornamented with frescoes and painted ceilings. The inlaid furniture is very fine indeed. The decoration and furnishing of the grand saloons occupied more than two years. These rooms are all on the ground floor, but the Queen's suite of three apartments (approached from the hall by a lift) are on the first floor, and the windows command the whole city of Florence, with the valley of the Arno beyond. These rooms open on to a very broad covered balcony, which is directly over the glass-enclosed galleries of the ground-floor. The extensive loggia is covered in with glass, and there is a very large glass-covered carriage entrance which connects the two wings of the villa. The interior of the house is most admirably arranged, either as a winter or as a summer residence.

STATISTICS.

A GOOD-SIZED whale yields about one ton of whalebone.

A WOMAN'S hair is said to weigh on the average fourteen ounces.

INTEMPERANCE annually causes five hundred persons in Prussia to commit suicide.

ICE artificially manufactured by the use of chemical mixtures is not a late idea by any means, the idea dating back to 1783.

THE last English census enumerated about five thousand women who are professional gardeners in this country, and six who are employed in superintending the drainage of towns.

GEMS.

It is easier to enrich ourselves with a thousand virtues than to correct ourselves of a single fault.

Do to-day's duty, fight to-day's temptation. Do not weaken and distract yourself looking forward to things you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw.

It is by imitation far more than by precept that we learn everything; and what we learn thus, we acquire not only more effectually, but more pleasantly.

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds; and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs of martial, brisk, or grave; some chord in unison with that we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

WELSH RABBIT.—Two or three slices of toast, put them in a small pan, quarter pound toasting cheese, one teaspoon butter, one tablespoon milk, a little pepper and mustard; cut the cheese in little bits, stir till it boils, and then pour it on the toasted bread.

VEAL WITH BAKED DUMPLING.—Rub three pounds of choice veal with salt, pepper and flour; place it with a tablespoonful of butter in a hot baking pan; add one cup of water, and set into a hot oven. When nearly well done arrange in the gravy the dumplings, cut into diamonds or long strips; bake quickly. To make the dumplings, take one cup sour milk, one half teaspoonful soda, one half cup lard, flour to make a dough; mix lightly and smoothly. Roll out until three-fourths of an inch thick; cut and bake.

RED CABBAGE, PICKLED.—The cabbage should not be cut till it is frosted a little; then take off the coarse outside leaves; shred it up very finely, the finer the better; put it in a flat dish, and sprinkle plentifully with salt; leave it for twenty-four hours, then squeeze as much of the juice out of it as you can, and put it in jars; put in with it between each layer a little black pepper and ground ginger; fill up the jar with cold vinegar, or vinegar that has been boiled and allowed to get cold; cork tightly and use.

CANDIED LEMON PEEL.—As lemons are used drop the yellow rind into a weak brine in a glass jar. When a dozen are thus pickled, they are freshened by putting them into cold water and letting them scald, changing the water once or twice to extract the salt. Boil them in the last water till they are thoroughly tender, and drain. Then make syrup enough to cover them out of slightly more than a pound of sugar and a pint of water, using always the same proportion of pint for pound. Cut the peel into pieces about half an inch square, and drop them into the boiling syrup, which is allowed to cook slowly till the peel is translucent. Then keep them slowly steeping till the sirup has almost dried out of the peel, spread on plates, sprinkle with more sugar and put in a cool oven to complete the drying.

MISCELLANEOUS.

DUTCH omnibuses are fitted with letter-boxes.

A SHORT HAND typewriter is the latest invention.

TARTARS take a man by the ear to invite him to eat or drink with them.

THERE was a financial bank at Babylon as early as 700 B.C., and, so far as known, it was the first on record.

THE Austrians have a particular penchant for the Easter egg. The shops are resplendent with the spring-time offerings.

JAPANESE jugglers are deft smokers. Several of them will sit before a curtain, and, from the tobacco smoke which issues from their mouths will form a succession of readable letters.

A LARGE number of flowers are bored, as it is believed, by bumblebees. They collect the nectar in this way, instead of entering by the mouth of the flower.

THE new Hungarian marriage law prescribes that betrothal, while conferring no right to compel performance of a marriage, may justify a claim for compensation.

THE cultivation of camphor is an important industry in Japan. Some of the larger and older trees have a diameter of fifteen feet and a reputed age of three hundred years. About five million pounds of camphor are sent out of Japan every year. One-fourth of this goes to the United States. The state forests are estimated to be able to maintain present supplies for another quarter of a century.

IT is believed that lightning is visible at a distance of 150 miles, but it is still in controversy how far away thunder can be heard. An astronomer who has made observations on the subject, declares it impossible for thunder to be heard at a greater distance than 10 miles; while another scientific authority, a meteorologist, has counted up to 130 seconds between the flash and the thunder, which would give a distance of 27 miles.

THE Parliament of the United Kingdom is the largest representative body in the world. In the House of Lords there are 553 persons entitled to vote, and in the House of Commons there are 670 members. France, in its Corps Legislatif, has 300 Senators and 584 Deputies. Italy has a varying number of Senators and 508 Deputies. Japan has 300 Peers and 300 representatives. Germany, in its Bundesrath, or Senate, has 58 members, but its Reichstag has 397 members. Spain's Cortes has 431 members. Canada has a Senate of 80 members, and a House of Commons of 215 members.

A FRAGMENT of bas-relief discovered in Egypt has shown how the obelisks and other large monoliths were transported from the quarry to their site. The step is depicted upright, on a great galley or vessel, which is being towed by a number of small boats alongside. This method of detaching a monolith from the mother rock is also explained by a semi-detached block in one of the quarries of Syene. After having been hewn clear on three sides, a deep groove was cut into the side still attached to the rock, and the holes were pierced, into which wooden pegs were driven. The pegs were then wetted, and the wool in swelling broke off the monolith from the quarry.

OBSERVATIONS regarding the growth of man have determined the following interesting facts: The most rapid growth takes place immediately after birth, the growth of an infant during the first year of its existence being about eight inches. The rate of increase gradually lessens until the age of three is reached, at which time the size attained is half that which the child is to become when full grown. After five years the succeeding increase is very regular till the sixteenth year, being at the rate, for the average man, of two inches a year. Beyond sixteen the growth is feeble, being for the following two years about six-tenths of an inch a year; while from eighteen to twenty the increase in height is seldom over one inch. At the age of twenty-five the growth ceases, except in a few rare cases.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

WIDOW.—Consult a solicitor.

VIC.—Hesse is pronounced in two syllables.

JAN.—10th January 1872, was a Wednesday.

DOLF.—Depends on the terms of the agreement.

GRANNIE.—We advise you to see a medical man.

BRUNO.—You should consult a veterinary surgeon.

BEGINNER.—Offer it to some publisher or magazine.

SOPHIE.—You had better take them to a bootmaker's.

SWEET SEPTEMBER.—September 13, 1833, was a Friday.

INJURED.—A son should always treat his father with courtesy.

SUFFERER.—The only cure is to have them removed by operation.

MARY.—Consult your chemist, there are many effective remedies.

A. S.—A debt is not recoverable from a person under twenty-one.

IGNORANT.—You will want a license for all dogs over six months old.

SENTIMENTAL ELLA.—The author of the verse quoted is unknown to us.

A LOVER OF ANIMALS.—The donkey is the longest-lived domestic animal.

K. G.—Keep to your left always is the rule of the middle of the road.

INFLUENZA.—That it will cure your cold is more than we are prepared to say.

BERT.—Good handwriting, and elementary arithmetic are the main qualifications.

ALDERMAN.—Nothing further is required than the services of the registrar.

AGATHA.—The refusal of an offer of marriage should not be made public.

ARCHIE.—The word cigarette comes from the Spanish *cigarrito* (little cigar).

DOUBT.—Depends upon whether you were engaged by the week or month.

GEORGE.—Purchase in the army has been abolished. It never existed in the navy.

R. G.—It was legal, and you cannot lawfully marry again until it is set aside.

IDLER.—The translation of *primus inter pares* (Latin), is "chief among equals."

T. V.—There is a carriage duty on every vehicle not kept solely for purposes of trade.

A. G.—We think the course that would make the least disturbance in church the best.

INTERESTED ONE.—There is no English law against the execution of female murderers.

CONSTANT READER.—We know of no method of restoring it. We believe there is none.

GRIFFIN.—You must inquire of a stamp collector or some other authority on the subject.

W. F.—It can be done, but legal assistance must be obtained. Yes, it was not her own fault.

ONE IN DOUBT.—One third to widow; remainder equally among children by both marriages.

DISSENTION.—The wife's earnings are her own separate property, and cannot be claimed by the husband.

DAIRYMAID.—Thirteen to fifteen ounces of butter should be made from a quart of good cream.

HEBE.—A license is wanted for the sale of postage stamps; it is usually given to any respectable person.

LADY PAT.—The term canonicals is used to describe the proper ecclesiastical dress of the clergy.

AMBITION.—A fairly good knowledge of the art of shorthand writing can be acquired in six months.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—You appear to have a good case, but it would be advisable to consult a solicitor.

COLIN.—Sir Colin Campbell's name was M'Liver; he adopted his mother's name, Campbell.

RIGHTOUS WRATH.—If he has not acknowledged the debt during the last six years, recovery is barred.

ALLAN.—Many think that the phrase is a corruption of "widow de grace"—"widow by courtesy."

TABERN.—You should go into any of the large metropolitan hospitals where you will receive every attention.

JULIET.—Well-washed and well-paired nails are indispensable requirements in any circle pretending to be refined.

INQUISITIVE ONE.—A codicil to a will to be valid must be executed with the same formalities, as to signing, publication, and witnesses, as the will itself.

T. S.—It is certainly not in good taste for anyone to taunt another with the want of a talent which he himself happens to possess.

ARGUMENT.—It is a contraction of the word "violencello," and is pronounced "chello" by Italians and some musicians.

BIDDY.—For local treatment, hold face over bowl of hot water, then rub with rough towel, and follow with a little toilet vinegar or spirits.

B. P. T.—Such familiar and delicate acts can only be done with propriety in the case of a relative or very intimate friend.

MARJORIE.—Shorthand and typewriting are by many persons thought more desirable than telegraphy as occupations for women.

FORGETFUL.—"Beautiful Star" is a Christy Minstrel song introduced by the Moore and Burgess troupe about thirty-five years ago.

ONE IN A FIX.—You cannot "discharge" an apprentice. You must apply to justices to get the indentures cancelled.

AN OLD READER.—A falsetto voice is that peculiar species of voice in a man the compass of which lies above his natural voice.

HELEN.—Brushing stimulates the growth of the hair and makes it glossy and soft. It also stops the hair from falling out, and is the best tonic for the scalp.

ALPHA.—All Privy Counsellors (who include the principal Ministers of the Crown and other leading statesmen) have a right to be addressed as "Right Honorable."

A TENANT.—Whatever was the agreement with the first landlord is still binding so long as the lease runs. Ask a lawyer to look at the document, and see what it says on the subject.

JACK.—Boil your meerschaum pipe in milk, carefully skimming it as scum rises to surface; when no more is seen, take out pipe, throw away milk, boil pipe in clean milk, then set it aside to drain; it is as good as new.

LOVE IS DONE.

Our love is done.

I would not have it back, I say;

I would not have my whole year May;

But yet, for our dead passion's sake,

Kiss me once, that I may strive to make

Our last kiss a supreme one,

For love is done.

Our love is done.

And still my eyes with tears are wet;

Our souls are stirred with vain regret;

We gaze farewell yet cannot speak,

And firm resolve grows strangely weak,

Though hearts are twin that once were one,

Since love is done.

But love is done,

I know it. Vow it; and that kiss

Must set a finish to our bliss,

Yet, when I feel thy lips touch mine,

My life again seems half divine,

Our very hearts together run:

Can love be done?

Can love be done?

Who cares if this be mad or wise?

Trust not my words, but read my eyes.

Thy kiss bids sleeping love awake!

Then take me to thy heart, oh, take

The life that with thine own is one!

Love is not done.

A. E. G.

S. B.—Yes, we know of nothing safer or better than a little lightly rubbed over and polished off with a soft rag. Leather unstretched will not bear wetting without injury.

VAXED VIDA.—If you are anything of a girl you can think of a thousand schemeful ways to find out what you want to know, though a swain who is "afraid" would not be to our taste.

BOS.—A good illustrator usually begins his art studies in early youth, and must possess more knowledge and experience than you can reasonably hope to obtain at your age and in your circumstances.

DISTRESSED MOTHER.—Children should be taught good manners as early as practicable. If they misbehave when away from home, their conduct reflects upon their parents, and they are held responsible for it.

JOSEPHINE.—"Meaning the same" is the literal translation of the Latin words *idem sonans*. They have reference to the similarity in the sound of names differently spelled.

WORRIED ONE.—Mainsprings cannot be prevented from breaking, but the breaking will not occur so often if the watch be wound carefully and protected from the cold when hung up against a wall by a piece of cloth, plush, or velvet.

G. N.—The square plain loaf must weigh two or four pounds, and bakers can be made to put it in the scale by purchasers in order that weight may be made up; all other loaves are "fancy," and do not come under the same law.

H. D. C.—Presents are not recoverable by any process of law: when a man gives a thing away he is supposed to know he is parting with it for good, if he does not expressly stipulate that it is to be returned to him in certain circumstances.

GERALD.—You allude to an ancient custom among the Romans. Among them a man was said to be in possession of a "salary" who had his maritum, his allowance of salt-money, or of salt wherewith to savour the food by which he lived. Thus "salary" comes from "salt."

A REGULAR SUBSCRIBER.—Society men and women of any literary standing are required to be well-read in the popular works of the day, for each book affords a topic of conversation and thus aids in making agreeable to both parties the time that may be passed in an exchange of views concerning it.

ONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW.—The best English cheeses are said to be the Stilton, Cheshire, and Cheddar. Gruyere cheese, made in Switzerland, is strongly flavoured with herbs. The Tartars make cheese from the milk of mares, the Arabs from that of camels, and the Laplanders from that of reindeer.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—A man is liable for the support of his wife, but a woman cannot be compelled to support her husband. If, however, he becomes chargeable to the parish, and the wife has property of her own, an order may be made upon her to contribute to his support.

LOVING MOTHER.—You cannot by any process obtain the discharge of the young man now for less than £18, and we could not advise the expenditure even if you possessed the money, because it is almost certain the ungrateful and foolish lad would be off again without delay.

DELICATE DORIS.—In regard to eating there is no doubt that the more deliberate we are in disposing of our meals the better health we are more likely to enjoy, especially if at all dyspeptic. Of course there is always a medium to be observed, even in our style of eating.

L. O. W.—The cigars named "cheroots," which are cut off square at each end, are made in the East Indies, chiefly at Manila, in the Philippine Islands, whence they are often called Manillas. The best cigars are made in Havana, from tobacco raised in Cuba; but a great many of those called "Havanas," are made in the United States.

KIT.—The origin of the harp is not known, but it was familiar to the Hebrews, and the Egyptians had some knowledge of it probably as early as 2000 B.C. In Ireland and in Wales harps were in use in the fifth and sixth centuries, and in the former it was adopted as the national emblem. In Wales it is still the national instrument.

TED'S LITTLE WIFE.—Boil and mash fine, six ounces of carrots. Add six ounces of suet, chopped fine, half a pound of currants, two large tablespoonfuls of sugar, half a nutmeg, a saltspoonful of salt, and three large tablespoonfuls of flour. Mix all the articles named thoroughly, put them in a greased pot, and boil the pudding fully three hours.

LILIAN.—To make tomato jelly for salads, take one can of tomatoes, or in tomato season, eight medium-sized tomatoes, skinned and stewed. Take also one-fourth of a box of gelatine. Pass the tomatoes through a sieve or strainer to remove the seeds. Season with pepper and salt, and then add the gelatine, which has previously been melted in hot water. It being now ready to be poured into a mould, it should then be placed on the ice to set. When cold, furnish with crisp lettuce leaves, and pour over the whole a mayonnaise dressing. If preferred, the jelly may be broken up and used as a garnish itself with the lettuce and dressing in the centre of the dish.

S. L.—There is no such verdict as manslaughter known to Scotch law; they have homicide, culpable homicide, and murder; the jury must find a verdict in accordance with the issues put to them; if the indictment states that the prisoner murdered the man, or alternatively that he killed him without meaning it, the jury may then find him guilty of culpable homicide; but where there is only one issue, that he murdered the man, the verdict must either be positively guilty or not guilty; or should the evidence not seem conclusive either of the man's innocence or guilt, it is not proven; that, however, is just as final as the other verdicts.

ANXIOUS CECIL.—The candle-fish is strictly a sea-fish. It approaches the coast to spawn, but does not enter rivers. It inhabits the Pacific ocean. It is not larger than a smelt, has a somewhat pointed and conical head and a large mouth. The colour is greenish olive on the back, passing into silvery white on the sides, and sparsely spotted with dirty yellow. It is said to be the fattest of all fishes, or indeed of animals, and is used by the Indians on the coast not only as an article of food, but for making oil. They often use it, in a dried state as a lamp for lighting lodges, and sometimes burn the fish alone, lighting it at the tail, and sometimes run a wick of woody threads through it.

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